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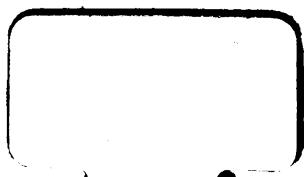
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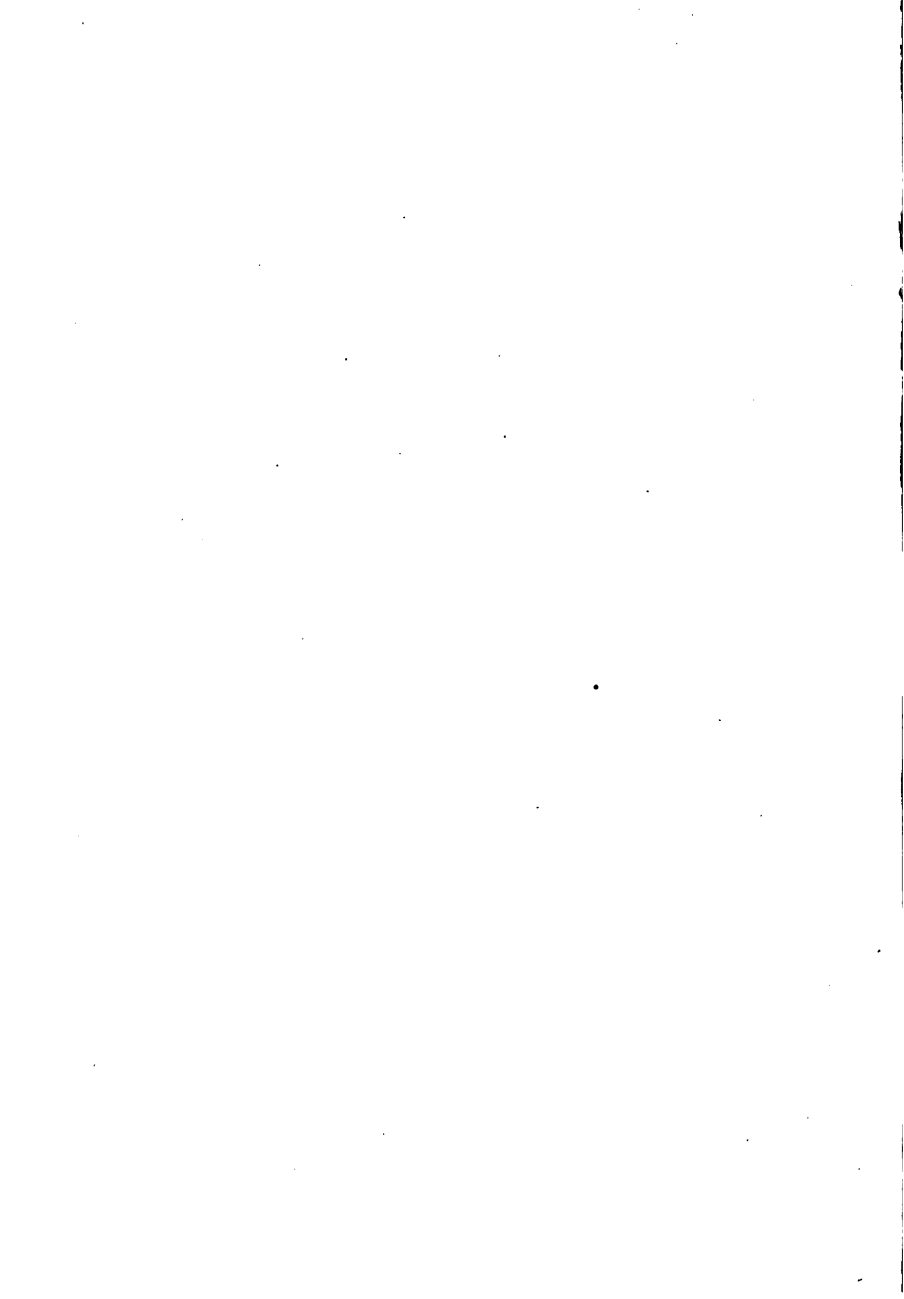


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FATHER CONNELL;

A TALE.

By THE ^{OC}O'HARA FAMILY.

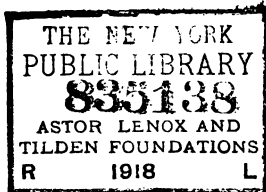
A New Edition with Introduction and Notes,

BY MICHAEL BANIM, ESQ.,

THE SURVIVOR OF THE "O'HARA FAMILY."

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1888

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Volume in the reader's hands will, it is hoped, prove a welcome addition to the standard light literature of our day. It is a new edition, in an improved form,—and enriched, as will be seen, with additional matter,—of a well-known Tale; the last, as well as the most pleasing,* and, in some respects, the most finished of that remarkable series issued by the brothers Banim under the name of the "O'Hara Family." The present work appeared in 1842, and is thus alluded to in a very interesting biography of Mr. John Banim, lately published.†

"Banim's severe illness had prevented him for some time from pursuing his literary avocations; but being anxious that his brother should take up and continue the Series, he writes to him as follows:—

"We have given, perhaps, too much of the dark side of the Irish character; let us for the present treat of the amiable. Enough of it is around us. I once mentioned to you the good, the childishly innocent, and yet the wise Father O'Donnell; we have only to take him as he really was, and if we succeed in drawing him life-like, he must be revered and loved, as we used to reverence and love him."

The tale of Father Connell was the result. Other particulars relating to its origin and composition the Publishers leave to be communicated to the reader by the gentleman best qualified to do it—the author himself, Mr. Michael Banim, who has done them the honor to contribute an original Preface and Notes to the present edition. They have only to

* A similar view is taken by Mr. Chambers, in a careful and discriminating critique on Mr. Banim's writings, in the *Cyclopaedia of English Literature*. Mr. C. remarks that the tendency of the author to dwell somewhat too exclusively upon scenes of turbulent and unchastened passion became gradually diminished; that many of his smaller tales were distinguished by great delicacy and tenderness, and that "Father Connell," (which he characterises as "an original and excellent novel") is "full of *gentle affectionate feelings and delineation*."

† The Life of John Banim.

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add their own high opinion of the tale, and their full confidence in its continued popularity among all classes of readers. It is not wanting indeed,—any more than the previous volumes of the “O’Hara Tales,”—in the sombre and the terrible; but over all this the beautiful and the good so touchingly predominate, that the effect upon the reader’s mind cannot be otherwise than healthy as well as pleasing. The scenes of exquisite pathos especially, with which the work abounds, claim for it a very high place in the literature of fiction; nor can anything more deeply affecting be found, even in the writings of the greatest of our novelists, than the closing scenes of the volume, which depict the last act of self-sacrifice, the death, and the funeral of the venerable hero of the tale. In corroboration of their estimate of the work, the Publishers may be permitted to append a few extracts from notices which appeared at the time of its first publication:—

“Mr. Banim has the credit, and a high one it is, of opening a new vein of fiction during Scott’s decline in the zenith, and showing that Irish Romance could compete with Scottish, or that of any other country. . . . The character who gives the title to the present work is an old Clergyman, of great openness of heart, and simplicity of mind and manners, although possessed of energy and resources when occasion called for them; and centreing in, or circulating about, this Irish ‘VICAR OF WAKE-FIELD,’ are the various groups of persons who figure in the story. . . . The beggar girl, Mary Cooney, is an exquisite picture; the robber, Costigan, also is drawn with remarkable force and skill.”—*Spectator*.

“As a popular hero, Neddy Fennell may throw down the glove to all his contemporaries; he is bold, generous, honest, and withal tender hearted. . . . The story contains more than one of those night scenes, and court-house interiors, which were so thrilling in the earlier O’Hara Tales, and will be found in this to have lost little of their potency.”—*Athenæum*.

“‘Father Connell’ upholds the reputation formerly gained by the author of the ‘O’Hara Tales,’ as one of the most vivid portrayals of Irish life. The present work is Irish, lively, and amusing, with enough of pathos to touch the softer feelings. Each and all of the actors in the story are distinct and admirable portraits.”—*Literary Gazette*.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

TO THE PRESENT EDITION.

IRRESPECTIVE of any artistic merit a tale may possess, there is a certain quality that imparts a degree of value, even to a clumsy production I mean a truthful delineation of nature.

A book (a story book) bears close analogy to a picture ; or a story book may be regarded as a series of pictures ; and the more closely the artist copies from nature, the more valuable is the product of his pen or pencil. The resemblance between the operations of the palette and the quill, could be traced almost to a minute identity. The choice of subject, the coloring, the dispensation of light and shade, the prominence of foreground, the haze and diminution of distance, the main light illuminating the principal figure, the relief and the individuality of objects ; all these things, and others, must be studied by the writer of a story, as closely as by the painter of a picture. In either case the master hand will be powerful and impressive, and fix and fascinate the reader or observer, in proportion to the power exerted.

In my judgment, the picture we love to look upon the longest, is that which is the most faithful to nature ; and the book we carry about with us in our pocket, and relax the mind with the oftenest, is that which gives us the truest reflex of our experiences ; the experiences of what we have ourselves seen and felt, not noticed perhaps distinctly, as we thought at the time, but yet impressed (as we now find) so firmly on us, as to produce lively pleasure by the truthfulness of the aroused remembrance.

High imaginative character, drawn with pen or pencil, brilliancy of color, mastery of touch, will astonish ; but these will not succeed in producing quiet, smiling pleasure ; while nature, truly represented, if the subject be not in itself repulsive, will attract and gratify.

It would ill become me,—and I am not salaaming to the reader,—to claim for the tale of "Father Connell" any rank in the aristocracy of literature. I will not, either, affect "the pride that apes humility," by disclaiming all pretension to merit for the story I have been the main hand in fabricating ; but I will ask such consideration as may be due to a veritable picture of a reality,—so far at least as refers to the hero, Father Connell.

I write in full sincerity, still without laying my forehead to the earth at the reader's feet, when I admit that I have more than a doubt of the

artist's power as a painter. I can state, however, in all truth, that a real subject sat for the portrait of Father Connell; and be that portrait what it may, as a work of art, harsh as may be the outline, faulty as may be the coloring, the reader may be assured the likeness is a good one, easily recognised by many yet living who remember the original. There is not one touch of gilding, one meretricious hue, to falsify or recommend the picture. The portrait is as life-like as the painter had capacity to portray.]

It may—or it may not—be known to the reader, that the stories offered to the public from time to time, under the name of "Tales by the O'Hara Family," were the joint productions of my late brother, John Banim, and myself. The following tale originated with me, and was criticised and prepared for the press by my brother; his death and its appearance were nearly contemporaneous. Having been the original writer, I can speak with certainty as to the strict delineation of the hero's character, for the copying of which I hereby claim credit, my claim in any other way going not one jot beyond.

When my brother and I were children, the Rev. Richard O'Donnell was the pastor of St. John's parish, Kilkenny. As children we loved our simple-hearted, worldly innocent, but religiously wise old pastor; in manhood we venerated his memory. We had been the wearers of white muslin surplices in his choir; for some successive years we were guests at his primitive twelfth-night's feast of cakes and ale; and, decorated with tiny scarves and hatbands, we were followers in the nearly three-mile-long procession which accompanied him to his humble grave.

His virtues, his eccentricities, and his peculiarities were well known to us. We had no necessity—and it was far from our desire—to imagine anything when drawing the character of our old friend. Many of the incidents of the story are real occurrences, to which I was myself either eye-witness, or of which I received the account from good authority.

If, as I set out by stating, a faithful copy from nature imparts a value to an otherwise indifferent production, the reader will easily understand why I have been tempted to pen this short introduction to the new edition of "Father Connell."

I candidly avow I have been urged by strong feelings of paternity; and, very naturally, with that feeling to impel me, I allily insinuate to the reader, something to this effect:—

"If the literary merits of the tale be insufficient to insure its favorable reception, I crave your indulgence, when you regard it as the framework of a true sketch from life."

I am the Reader's very obedient Servant,

MICHAEL BANIM.

FATHER CONNELL.

CHAPTER I.

THE parish priest of——parish, about thirty-five years ago, counted half-way between seventy and eighty; yet he was a hale, sturdy man without any droop in his figure, or any indication of old age about him—this appearance resulting from an excellent natural constitution, habits of great temperance and regularity, and an abundance of healthful exercise, on foot and on horseback—indeed, in every possible way.

He used to walk along, with his chest expanded, his shoulders thrown back, his head quite erect, his arms hanging straight by his sides, and his fingers closed on the palms of his hands, and almost always working against them. His face showed scarce a wrinkle, and it was florid—not red and white, however, like some old people's faces, not yet purple like those of others, as if the smaller blood-vessels had burst, and become congealed, within the surface of their skins—but it was overspread with a still rosy color of health. His forehead was expansive, and, at the temples, square; his eyes were blue, and generally expressing thought and abstraction—in which state, they used to stare straight-forward, almost without ever blinking—yet they often relaxed into a smiling, or, as it might be, moistened expression; during which change they appeared half-closed, and opened and shut very fast indeed. His scarcely grizzled eyebrows were bushy and protruding; his nose was long, large, but well-formed, and with a broad back. His lips were full, and for his age, remarkably red and handsome.

But above all, there was about his countenance the indications of a great singleness, and primitiveness, and beauty of character—so that if you meet him, stepping measuredly, yet almost springingly along his superb street, or the adjacent roads, and silently moving his lips, and working, as usual, the palms of his hands with his fingers, and taking no notice of you, though perhaps you might be an intimate friend, and his old eyes winking, and his whole face smiling to itself, you must inevitably have said, that the smile was not provoked by any object or circumstance then noticed by him, but rather that it came from a heart enjoying, at that moment, the sunshine of a virtuous, and therefore very happy intention; or—excuse poor, human vanity, even in its least offensive shape—recollection, perhaps.

Since the day he had become a clergyman, Father Connell had never altered the form or the texture of any article of his attire. He still wore the curious head-dress which his present biographers have already endeavored to describe—in their tale of John Doe in fact—as sworn by Father O'Clery—or indeed, if they had told the perfect truth, by the celebrated Irish friar, Father O'Leary. It consisted of an article made of goat's hair, or of horse hair, protruding, from above the ears down to the neck, into a curled yet formal mass, daily dressed with powder and pomatum—and above this rampart arose a round, almost conical continuation of the wig, very smoothly slicked down, and slightly, but sharply peaked in the middle of the forehead. When a hat was placed upon the structure, it rested on the frizzled bulwark, of course, and therefore never descended lower than about the middle of the back of the head. And the hat which Father Connell, at least, wore with his grotesque head-clothing, was a good match for it—being very low-crowned, and exceedingly broad-rimmed.

Our priest's black coat sloped to the skirts, and those skirts were enormously ample, and had great pocket-flaps across them, mohair buttons, also on a gigantic scale, ornamenting both. His waistcoat was collarless, and fell, again, with huge pocket-flaps, nearly to his mid thigh. His black small-clothes were tightened at his knees by large silver buckles; and blue worsted stockings covered his legs; and his sharp pointed shoes also exhibited, across the insteps,

silver buckles of great dimensions. Snow could not be whiter than his muslin stock, nor than the indication of his inner garment, every day in the year ; and in winter, an outside coat of dark blue, or, as it was then called a "jock," with a little round cape, hanging scarcely half way down his back, while its skirts did not come lower than his knees, formed his protection against inclement weather.

And thus attired, Father Connell, while walking along the streets of the adjacent town, necessarily displayed, joined with his peculiarities of mien, face, and bearing, before noticed, an air of eccentricity which passers-by, not very well, or at all acquainted with him, would stop to criticise ; while he himself, good man, remained perfectly unaware that anything about him or in him deserved particular notice.

CHAPTER II.

It was Twelfth Night. Six o'clock, the hour for vespers in Father Connell's little parish chapel, jingled from a little cracked bell, set up at the top of a ruined, square Norman castle, some distance from the half-tolerated place of worship ; for at that time there existed a law that no Catholic house of prayer should summon its congregation from its own walls by means of a bell ; and, in removing the illegal monitor from immediate contact with his chapel, the priest hoped to elude the pains and penalties awarded by this large-minded piece of legislation, for any breach of its mandate.

So, the little old cracked bell was wringing ; the candles in the two badly gilded, wooden branches, which hung from the ceiling of the chapel, had been lighted ; and six others, supported by tall candlesticks, also wooden, and badly gilded, on the altar, were in process of illumination, by the agency of a very handsome little boy, with auburn hair, which curled and glittered over his white surplice, as far as his shoulders ; and the people summoned to evening devotion, were coming in ; or, after bending before the sacrament,

enclosed in the altar tabernacle, were decently taking their places throughout the poor building.

In the centre of the chapel certain moveable seats, technically called the choir, were arranged. When put together they formed three sides of a long parallelogram, running from the semi-circular railing around the altar (which enclosed a space called the sanctuary) to nearly the other end of the edifice. The top of this choir consisted of three old worm-eaten chairs, with high triangular backs, of which the middle one aspired to the dignity of an arm-chair, and further in assumption of its dignities, it stood upon a kind of little dais, one or two steps above the clay and mortar floor. At right angles with these old seats, and almost touching them at either hand, were two long benches with railed backs; while plain forms continued the side lines of the parallelogram, down to, as has been said, the railings before the altar.

It need not be said that the old arm-chair, of little ease, was occupied by Father Connell, during vespers; while its two humble attendants were filled by his two curates. The confronting benches, proceeding from them towards the altar, afforded places to very religious men, wearing long linen garments, and after them, two little boys, wearing nice muslin surplices—the most eminent for good conduct, in every way, to be found in the parish, as well as being the most distinguished for attention to certain small official duties of the chapel—*enfants de prêtre*, in fact. And upon the forms continuing the lines of the benches, sat a second class of pious men and boys, not indeed robed in white, but still honored with the distinction of immediately assisting in the chant of the vespers—although, be it noticed, every man, woman, and child of the congregation, might, if he or she liked, do the same thing.

While the places in the choir reserved for the unrobed men and boys were being taken possession of by them, the other pious men and boys, who wore the long linen dresses and muslin surplices, were assisting each other in the proper adjustment of their attire, in a little sacristy, at the back of the altar, and approachable from the chapel, first by a kind of gateway in the middle of its railed enclosure, and then by a door at one of the sides. Father Connell's curates already stood robed; and the old priest himself

knelt, in silent prayer, to a kind of desk, in a corner—no one around him speaking above his breath.

He arose, and proceeded to put on his ceremonial surplice. To aid him in this task, immediately bounded forward the very handsome, glossy-haired boy, who has been seen lighting the tall candles on the altar, and who, that business ended, had been waiting in the sacristy to enjoy the honor of discharging a conferred duty of a higher degree. In his buoyant eagerness to exhibit as an expert priest's valet, he happened to tread too familiarly upon one of Father Connell's feet; at which, smarting a good deal, and therefore a little ruffled at first, the clergyman suddenly turned round upon him; but so soon as his eye rested upon the half-penitent, half-laughing face of the blooming urchin, he could not help—for the old man loved the boy—smiling in sympathy; and then he took him by the ear, in a make-believe show of punishing him, while thumb and finger pressed no harder than could a touch of velvet have done, and proceeded to address the offender.

"Neddy Fennell," it was in a whisper he spoke, and there was a curious contrast between his assumed tone of reproof, and the reflection in his eyes of the glances of his half-spoiled pet; "Neddy Fennell, will you ever stop doing mischief? Neddy, while you are in the house of God, my child, you must behave quietly, and with decorum and gravity; in the fields, you may jump and play, Neddy Fennell, but in God's own house you must, I say, be orderly and well-behaved." And again he feigned to inflict punishment on the boy's ear, only playing in the mean time with the little silky-surfaced organ. The moment he let it go, Neddy Fennell, covering it with his own hand, assumed such a farcical face of mock terror and suffering, and so well acted the part of pretending to wipe off his surplice imaginary drops of blood, which had trickled on it from the tyrannical pressure of the priest's finger and thumb, that his little companions, amongst whom he now resumed his place, grew red in the faces, with the efforts they made to suppress their laughter.

The priest having adjusted his surplice, at the vestment press, stood inactive for a moment as if in thought, and then turned round and spoke in a low voice to all those who stood by:—

"The men and the boys of the choir are to wait here in the sacristy after vespers for me; I have something very particular to say to them."

No one distinctly replied, but there was a murmur of assent, with a bending of many heads, which gave a sufficiently satisfactory answer.

After pausing, in reverential recollection of what he had next to do, Father Connell gave a well-known signal, by waving to and fro the back of his hand—and there was dignity in the motion; and thereupon the men of the choir, in their white linen dresses, issued out of the sacristy into the chapel, two by two, holding their joined hands before them, and after them went the little boys wearing surplices, imitating their elders, as well as they could, in every respect. In passing through the railed-in space before the altar, all and each bent their knees and bowed, as the general congregation had done on entering the chapel, to the veiled sacrament; and then proceeded to assume the places we have before mentioned as allotted to them. Finally, Father Connell and his curates quitted the sacristy, and in passing, he knelt praying on the steps of the altar; after which taking his throne, his two reverend assistants at his either side, vespers began by his giving out, after some prefatory form, and in a fine old voice, the magnificent psalm of "*Dixit Dominus*." He was answered by the whole strength of the congregation, young and old, in the result of whose efforts, although perfect accordance or harmony did not indeed occur, there was much of impressive devotion, which ought to have given satisfaction to any good heart; and thus continued the vespers, through a succession of many of the most beautiful of the psalms, the pastor always beginning each psalm. But we had almost forgotten to notice that the individuals particularly entitled to take up the responses, were a row of pious women, wearing ample white dresses, with hoods that came over their heads, and almost over their faces, who occupied a form within the railing before the altar, as well as by young girls in the galleries, indifferently well instructed in their occasional services by the old, perpetual clerk of the chapel—himself, by the way, not a very eminent musician.

Vespers ended. All the lay persons previously occupying the "choir," returned from the chapel into the sacristy,

and employed themselves in taking off and folding up their chapel attire; and then all awaited the re-entrance of their parish priest, as he had desired them to do. Were there none among them who well understood what his formal intimation before vespers meant? Ay, indeed, a good many, boys as well as men; and they could scarcely now suppress, although, under the influence of a decorous feeling, they had lately done so, indications of their knowledge of Father Connell's intentions towards them, for the evening. It was Twelfth Night, in fact, and the majority of them knew his practices well.

He came back to them; he gravely unrobed himself, not confronting them; he bent his head over his clasped hands; and then he turned round, and, his face shining with the delight which he knew he was about to impart to his auditors, said:—

“My good friends and little children, this is the season for offering with pure and light hearts, to a good and great God, praises both in solemn hymns and in cheerful acts, for the wonderful and merciful bounty of his coming to redeem and save us, and my friends and you, my little children, we have returned here after singing praises and thanksgivings to the Lord of heaven and of earth; and He in his love will not be displeased if we now enjoy ourselves in making use—temperately, however, and very temperately—of some of the good things which he has placed at our disposal—yes, my friends, big and little, we will now make merry amongst ourselves; so come after me, my good friends and little children; it is Twelfth Night, and we ought to rejoice, and we will rejoice; come—I have prepared a little treat for you—come after me, and let us rejoice.”

Father Connell and his invited guests had not far to go to their house of entertainment, for it was not more than a hundred paces from the chapel. He stopped at the head of his troop—the urchins partly composing it shouting shrilly though in a low key, and the pious men chuckling at their antics—he stopped, we say, before the humble entrance door to his thatched dwelling, and after laughing heartily himself, knocked loudly. His old housekeeper, whose business it had been to prepare for the *soirée*, and who therefore expected the throng of revellers, quickly

opened the portal to his summons, and, as amiably as her curious nature and habits would permit, bid everybody welcome.

Mrs. Mulloy was a peculiarity in her way;—tall, coarsely featured, pock-marked, and with an authoritative something like a beard, curling on her double chin; and almost fat in person and in limbs. Her bearing was lofty, her look arbitrary if not severe, and in every respect she seemed fully sensible of the importance of her station as housekeeper to her parish priest;—though it was whispered that even upon him, the source from which she derived all her consequence, Mrs. Mulloy did not always hesitate to forbear from dictatorial remonstrances, whenever in the exercise of his charitable extravagance, she was pleased to detect a wasteful system of dissipation. Let it be added that her voice was the contrary of what Shakspeare calls:—

“An excellent thing in woman;”

and that her master was a little afraid of its not unfrequent eloquent exercise.

Yet on the present occasion, allowing, as a great rarity, her usual inhospitality to unbend a little, Mrs. Mulloy, inspired by the pervading spirit of the hilarity of the season, did as we have hinted, behave very graciously in her capacity as portress.

“Welcome then,” she duskily said; “welcome all, and *cead mille a faultha*, to the Twelfth-Night’s faste; come in, your reverence;—come in, men and boys, every mother’s son o’ ye.”

“Come in, my children,” echoed the old priest, gleefully, “come in, in the name of God;” and he bustlingly led the way into his white-washed, earthen-floored, and only sitting-room; in the black marble chimney-piece of which was, however, rudely carved a mitre, indicating that the paltry apartment had once, and very recently, been inhabited by a Roman Catholic bishop; but such was the fact; and such were the times. Father Connell was himself Catholic dean of his diocese.

Seats of every description had been arranged all round the parlor; in its centre stood a large square table, at the four corners of which was a mighty jug filled with ale,

whose froth puffed over and adown the sides of each vessel. Rows of delf mugs were placed at the edges of the table; but the crowning feature of the Twelfth Night's feast was a great two-handled osier basket, filled and pyramidically heaped up with brown-skinned, shining cakes of a fragrance so delicious as to perfume the apartment, and penetrating so keenly the nasal nerves of at least the younger portion of the guests, as to give them fair promise of the capability of the contents of that basket to gratify equally and even more satisfactorily another of the senses. We could dilate at great length on the marvellous and long inherited excellence of these cakes. In our childhood they were termed, after the name of their then manufacturer, "Biddy Doyle's cakes;" in generations farther back they had borne, out of reverence to their great inventor, the appellation of "Juggy Fowler's cakes;" and Juggy Fowler had sold or bequeathed to Biddy Doyle the secret of making them; but Biddy Doyle died suddenly and intestate, so that the grand secret died with her; and alas, from that day to this, no succeeding *artiste* has possessed genius enough, truly to imitate, in the estimation of the experienced, Juggy Fowler's far-famed and unique condiment.

We have enumerated all the dainties provided by Father Connell for his Twelfth Night's *soirée*, nor did he in his heart deem anything better or rarer could have been supplied on the occasion, in which opinion not one of his company differed from him; for indeed when they had taken their places, as exactly observed by them in the "Choir" at vespers, around the board, but at a distance from it, a set of happier faces could not on that same evening have been seen at any other board, no matter how costly, nor in any other mansion, no matter how magnificently contrasted with the poor priest's parlor. Our host hurried about, as if his very heart and soul were in the scene—though why our mysterious "as if?" There is no doubt at all upon the subject; his heart and soul *were* in it. With one or two favorites assisting him, he walked round and round the circle until each individual of it held a "Biddy Doyle" in one hand and a merry mug of ale in the other; and he patted the children on the head; or rallied the men on their peculiarities; or joined in their homely jests upon each other; and loud and general arose

the frequent laugh, in which none joined more gleefully than he did; and almost as frequent as his laughter, and fully as loud, were his calls upon "Peggy," to replenish from the half barrel under the stairs, the gigantic jugs which stood at the four corners of the square old oak table in the middle of the banquet hall.

Be it understood that all the members, men and boys, of our old friends's choir were unpaid volunteers; and moreover, of a very humble class in society—in fact, working masons, or slaters, or carpenters, and so forth, or else very inferior shopkeepers, and with few exceptions, the sons of all such. And yet with these men and boys our good priest laughed, jested, and made merry; and anon, storytelling, himself setting the example, became the order of the evening. And a few of these we shall here glance at, while others of them, reported more at length, will be found in another place.

Jack Moore, then, a very tall, uncouthly shaped mason, recounted how all the neighborhood in which he dwelt, had, a few evenings before, been "frightened to death" by the sudden coming to life, after *her* death, of "ould Alice Mahony."

The body of "ould Alice" had, as Jack stated, been "laid out" to be waked, on the door of the room in which she died—taken off its hinges for the purpose, a common expedient in such emergencies, and on it her lifeless body lay stretched, with a handsome shroud on. There was plenty of snuff and tobacco for all the attendants at the wake, and plenty of gossip going on. The town clock—(yes, Mrs. Radcliffe!)—solemnly—toll—twelve—when up sprang old Alice on her temporary couch, and without quite opening her eyes, sat on her heels, and, almost thrusting her knees against her teeth, as she had been much used to do before she died. Upon this, out ran, except two or three, the throng who had previously been waking her, tumbling helter-skelter over each other, and those who were last in the race wildly screaming in terror, and swearing that she was bounding after them bird-like, though with some little assistance from her shrivelled arms. And here ended Jack Moore's story; Jack, a man of reserved and not very exploring habits of mind, solemnly and contentedly dropping it at this point of interest.

Tim Brennan, "the stone cutter," supplied, however, a commentary on the wonderful tale—he having been one of the very few self-collected persons who had remained behind in the wake-room after Alice had sat up on the door; and he explained that the solitary and neglected creature had died suddenly, quite alone, with her nether limbs crippled up; had been so found by some chance visitors the next morning, cold and stiff; that, in order to straighten her "dacently," and make her "a handsome corpse," her now attentive old female neighbors had hit on the expedient of strapping across her knees, and of nailing down, at either side of her bier, something not sufficiently strong for their purpose; that in process of time this badly constructed piece of machinery gave way; that consequently, the death-rigid limbs suddenly resumed the position in which He, the Master, had confirmed them; and that was all, so that Alice had not indeed come to life; and her body, instead of voluntarily jumping off the old door, had only rolled off it; and she had all along been stone dead, and was now decently buried to the heart's content of any one who might choose to satisfy himself on the subject. But Jack Moore gave no credit to this account of the matter; for his own eyes had been witnesses of the real event; he was one of the very first to run out after plainly seeing old Alice bounce upon her heels to the floor; and as undeniable proof of his assertions, he exhibited a contusion on his lip, which he had received by knocking it against the top of the head of a much shorter man than himself, while that person impeded his way, during their joint escape from the old woman's leap-jack kind of pursuit after them. In the dubious state of mind in which these two readings of the matter left the audience, there was now no laughter, nor even smile; their entertainer being the only person amongst them who continued to chuckle heartily.

Jeff Corrigan's story came next. He recounted the miraculous finding, very early one morning, of the well-known night-cap of James Dullard, the weaver, on the only remaining pinnacle of the old castle near at hand, and before noticed as affording a legal place for the little cracked bell, used in summoning Father Connell's congregation to prayers.

Old Jim Dullard had, upon a certain night, fallen asleep

at his loom; and while he dozed, he seemed to dream that somehow he was in the ruined building; that he had ascended the spiral stairs; clambered, at the devil's suggestion, he supposed, and with evident peril to life and limb, to an old man of seventy, up to the very highest attainable point of the edifice; and had there ventured to look down, and become inexpressibly terrified at his height from the surface of the earth. While just awakening from his trance, his wife came in to summon him to a late supper; missed off his head its usual covering; hinted the fact to him; and then, after passing his hand over his bald head, his pallid face turned into a dingy white color, even more remarkable than was its wont; his long jaws dropped, and became still more elongated; and in utter consternation he now additionally recollected, and admitted to his spouse, that after having been so very much frightened in his dream, while looking downward from the top of the "ould castle," he fancied he had hung upon its point nearest to the sky, the article in question. She laughed, and called him to her assistance, peered everywhere through the little manufactory in which was her husband's loom; but no night-cap could be found; and horrible to add, very early the next morning, James Dullard, issuing forth with a next-door neighbor, whom he had called up to afford him sympathy, and add to his courage in his projected investigation, discovered the missing head-gear—while, however, only looking up to the old castle, from their little street of cabins—perched on the exact place where James had but dreamt having put it; and he ought to know it well, although now seen at such a distance; for he had worn it day as well as night for the last ten or twelve years.

So James Dullard had dreamt no dream at all. He must have put the night-cap, where it was now visible, with his own hands, or, (how the devil—God forgive us!) could it have got there? or, again, how could he have ever known that it had got there, if he had not put it there, inasmuch as no one had ever told him it was to be seen there, before he went out with his neighbor, in consequence of his abominable suspicion, and plainly saw it there? The matter was a puzzle, and a very nervous one. He partially admitted the act to be his own, and he more than partially denied it. His bewildered mind did

not know what to do. True, he had heard of people who walk in their sleep, ay, and who even climb in their sleep; but how could he climb, either awake or asleep, whose joints were so old and rusted that they scarcely served him to creep out from his loom, every day for about an hour, to enjoy the fresh air, and particularly up to the very pinnacle of that dreaded old castle? The mystery became deeper and more fearful; and so it continued up to the moment when Jeff Corrigan told the story.

He ceased, and there was again a pause of doubt and awe among the listeners; and even Father Connell did not now laugh outright. He took it into his head, however, to go up and down amongst them all, sage men and boys as they were, collecting their opinions as to how the thing could really have occurred; and when a most absurd and amusing mass of interpretations had been delivered, then indeed he enjoyed his hearty fit of laughter; informing them that, chancing to have been called out, to attend, on horseback, a remote country "call" (a summons from a dying person) upon the morning when James Dullard ventured out in quest of his night-cap—some time before James got up, however—he had himself seen Ned Roach's thievish pet jackdaw busily employed at the top of the old building, in placing, on the point, where even at this instant it was visible to all observers, the old red night-cap. And here Ned Roach, the shoe-maker, joined egotistically in the priest's laugh at the feat of his jackdaw; and, the pressure of superstitious terror, in various shapes, removed off their spirits, great indeed was its echo throughout all the assembled guests.

A few other tales, as we have before hinted, enlivened the circle, which we again aver we must postpone,—but not for a long time even from our present all-devouring reader. And songs now took up, as a finale, the entertainment of the evening; and many old Irish ones were pretty well given by some of the men of the choir; and "Crazy Jane," and "Death and the Lady," and "Begone, dull care," and so forth, were droned out by others of them. Father Connell himself, being called upon, tried to recollect the only song—we do not know what song—that he had learned in his early youth, but after repeated failures in his own mind, and half irritated by his sense of the ne-

cessity of contributing to the mirth of his revellers, he suddenly broke out into a joyous Latin hymn, and as suddenly stopped short, grievously scandalized at himself; and then, to cover his confusion, he appealed to "his boys," to help him out with his "portion of mirth;" upon which all of them became dumb and sheep-faced, except his old pet, Neddy Fennell, who, when no one else would befriend his patron, in this urgency, nimbly stepped to the middle of the floor, and with the small portion of a "Biddy Doyle" in one hand, and a half finished mug of ale in the other, sang with much spirit and fun, if not with skill or science, "Billy O'Rourke was the boy for it—whoo!"

This little display affected his parish priest in a peculiar way. Perhaps it was the first time he had ever heard a song of such a character; but however that might be, the old man now looked amazed, and as if admiringly, on such a new proof of the cleverness of his young friend; and then, as the little fellow swayed his body and limbs, and frisked here and there, humoring the burden of his melody, Father Connell smiled and winked his eyes, and laughed, and wagged his head from side to side, and almost attempted to whistle, in unison with the unexpected talent and capers of the public performer before him; and when Neddy had finished, he beckoned to him, took the pretty boy in his arms, kissed him, played with his auburn hair, made him promise over and over again to be a good boy, slid a shilling into his pocket, although at that time neither Neddy Fennell nor any of his family wanted such a donation; and finally, laying his hands on the urchin's shoulders, gently forced him down on his knees, to give him his blessing.

And Father Connell's *soirée* almost so ended. True, he topped the delight of all his juvenile guests by giving them each a silver sixpence, as a Christmas-box; and cordially gratified and made important in their own estimation, the seniors of "the choir" by very often shaking hands with them at parting, whilst every one received with bent heads and knees, their old pastor's blessing. But with little Neddy Fennell he lingered at his humble postern door when they were quite alone; again put his arms round him, again kissed him, while Neddy thought he felt a warm tear drop on his sunny cheek; and again, and

again, besought him to promise to be good, sighs of apprehensive doubt for the future—as we know them to have been—now and then interrupted the voice of the monitor.

And since our hero, Father Connell, has now proved himself so interested about the present and future welfare of Neddy Fennell, we may be allowed to give one back chapter, to the past situation of little Neddy, embracing, necessarily, incidents concerning his father and mother, which we believe will not be found uninteresting.

CHAPTER III.

NEDDY FENNELL's father, Atty, or Arthur Fennell, had been a glover in the only respectable street of the town, forming the city portion of Father Connell's extensive country parish. Atty, in his early youth, was a comely looking lad, single-hearted, simple-minded, yet wise and prudent; trustworthy, industrious, and skilful in his trade; sincerely punctual in his religious duties, and, for all the reasons suggested by this short description of him, respected and esteemed by his master, "Simon Bergin, the glover."

When Arthur was about seventeen, the only child of his master and mistress became apprenticed to a mantuamaker—for, although her parents were well to do in the world, and loved to excess their beautiful little pet, they would not bring her up in idleness. And indeed little Fanny Bergin deserved her father and mother's love, as much on account of her rare beauty, as for her sweet disposition, shown in her constant soft smile, her gentle fairy voice, her obedience, and her general feminineness of character.

Fanny spent the day in the house of the person to whom she was apprenticed, returning, however, to her father's roof for the night. To guard her against all imaginable mishaps, whether from rude people, or from rude weather, Simon and Mrs. Bergin deemed that a competent escort was quite necessary on her return home in the evenings

To this office they appointed Atty Fennell, thus it would seem giving him beforehand a kind of intimation of a fuller confidence, as regarded their darling and only child, to be hereafter placed in him. Atty well discharged his task. He would whisk with his cudgel—that cudgel which was ready to encounter a giant in her defence—the very straws from her path, in fine weather; and, if it rained, his instructions entitled him to bear Fanny home in his arms;—so that on wet and dark evenings he used to enter, with his light burden, into the little parlor, where her father and mother sat to the fire, his lantern swinging from the middle finger of his left hand, and the ostentatious cudgel tucked under his right arm.

Time rolled on, and it is needless to say how all this ended. Every one will guess that in a few years after Arthur was out of his apprenticeship, and Fanny also unshackled from the bonds of her professional mistress, they were, after having been a long while before very sincerely in love with each other, married, to their own hearts' content, as also to the full gratification even of the parents of the almost over-cared-for little bride; as to the bridegroom's father and mother, no consent could have been asked of them, for they were dead, having left, however, in the hands of a careful trustee, a sum locally sufficient, and indeed considerable, to enable Atty to engage, when out of his apprenticeship, in any enterprise on his own account, with a befitting show of independence—a circumstance, by the way, which, highly and deservedly as Mr. and Mrs. Bergin valued the plain, honest, though rather simple character of Arthur, might have much assisted their final resolves for surrendering into his future protection the welfare and happiness of their little Fanny, with all her soft smiles, gentleness, clinging and dependent affection, and yet nearly weakness of disposition. Besides, their idol was not absolutely to be separated from them. Arthur Fennell and she were to continue to abide under their paternal roof; and thus, four people who loved each other better than they loved all the world besides, would for many a long year form a delightful family circle—with perhaps the addition, in a few of those many happy years, of some little strangers, whose feelings would soon be interwoven into its web of domestic felicity.

So, the sun of hope, the brightest and the most unclouded sun that ever shone, or ever can shine on mortal creatures, blazed in absolute brilliancy upon the coming nuptials of poor Atty and his dear little Fanny Bergin. Yet, alas, big a liar as hope is, she never told bigger lies in all her life—that is to say, since the beginning of the world, with which, we do think she was born, purely for the purpose of keeping it delusively twirling on—the old gratuitous cheat, never, we repeat, told a bigger lie than on the occasion of which we now speak. Her lies were not to be sure immediately found out; for years and years she “lied like truth,”—small praise to her, experienced practitioner in her art as she is; and—but let us not anticipate in this unskilful fashion.

Without a cloud, or the speck of one, in the sky of their seeming future lot, Atty and Fanny prepared for their marriage-day; pure hearts, primitive minds, rational calculations, perfect love, and, if it be possible to say so of human beings in such a state of extatic anticipation, religious duties, above all other observances, presiding over their arrangements. Atty, in particular, was swayed on the momentous occasion by his former pious habits. Regarding marriage as a sacrament, and a most solemn one, he disciplined himself fitly to receive it, by previously approaching other sacraments of his church; those, namely, of Penance and of the Eucharist. And if ever a man entered into the married state with devoted love for his wife, and at the same time with a holy sense of the sin of even slightly infringing upon the vow of fidelity to be pledged to her at the altar, that man was Arthur Fennell.

He was married. For about two years the juggling prophet, we have rather bitterly spoken of, proved true; all was indeed happiness in the united families; but now came Hope's lie the first. Old Simon Bergin died suddenly; his terrified and pining wife soon followed him to the grave; and thus ended the treacherous promise held out to them of the “many happy, happy long years” they were to enjoy with their children and with their children's children. Again, however, so far as regarded Arthur, every thing appeared perfectly to brighten up. His industry gained him great success in his trade; that success some little wealth of course, so that he grew into a respected

citizen; and, unfortunately for his poor wife and only child, he at length deemed himself called on, that he might be enabled to supply the increasing demands made upon his shop to engage a confidential journeyman, who was also to have considerable control over his accounts and receipts. A confidential journeyman!—a tall, spare-limbed, thin-lipped, solemn-faced, smooth-tongued hypocrite;—a canting, precise, cruel scoundrel and robber. Arthur, however, did not know this—out of his very nature could not know it; in his own estimation, therefore, he was growing richer and richer every day; and over all his worldly thriving and enjoyment, the star of love still and still twinkled brilliantly on; indeed, as a little instance of the undiminished affection existing now for a considerable period between him and his ever-enchanting Fanny, poor Arthur would often send for her, in the midst of his daily industry, to come a moment to speak with him; and when she had obeyed his summons, all he had to say was, “I only wanted to look at you, my darling;” and when, after mildly answering the fond glance of his eyes, Fanny withdrew, he would re-engage, with redoubled vigor, in his more important occupations.

Arthur became—and Hope’s lie the second, and the most tremendous one of all she had ever uttered, at least to our unsuspecting friend, is now to be exposed—Arthur became a member of “the Charitable society” of his native city. This was an association composed of the respectable portion of the middle classes of his fellow-townsmen, and established for the weekly relief of poor bed-ridden objects. To be elected a member of it, when three black beans could have excluded him, was a flattering proof of the rising estimation in which he was held; and Fanny and he often gloried over the circumstance in their fireside commentaries together; and they for some time wondered, and wondered upon what evening he might expect, according to the observances of the society, to be summoned as president at one of its weekly sittings. That proud evening came at last; and, after kissing his little wife again and again, Arthur Fennell issued forth, dressed in his best, to assume his new dignity.

He took the chair; the business of the evening was precisely and soberly gone through;—the solemn little

secretary closed his books ;—and neighborly enjoyment and good-fellowship became the order of the now merely social meeting. Hot tumblers of punch stood at the right hand of each member, and were now and then replenished ; and the new president, although previously almost a “tee-totaler,” conceived himself called upon to patronize the usages of those around him. And jests, and good things, were cracked and uttered on every side, and anon certain marked individuals were cajoled into repeating oft-repeated, and often laughed at egotistical stories ; in listening to which, though not half comprehending the suppressed ridicule chuckling in the breasts of the general company towards the narrators, Arthur Fennell laughed more vigorously than any one present.

For the secretary, a round little bundle of a man, wanting three inches of five feet, and a schoolmaster to boot, was decoyed into a description, which the wags of the society induced him to give, almost weekly, of several desperate naval engagements, in which he had performed wonders of valor. “Myself and another able-bodied seaman,” he would very often say, “did so and so, or were engaged in such and such an achievement ;” at which, glancing at the “ableness” of his body, or else commenting upon the small bravado style in which he delivered the history of his exploits, the clever ones winked in keen enjoyment upon each other. In fact, the mendacious little man had, to their knowledge, never been to sea at all.

And another celebrated exaggerator, a shopkeeper, in “the main street,” having once, upon a great urgency, absolutely journeyed to London, detailed in a very peculiar way some of the marvels he had there witnessed. Amongst other things, he was now coaxed into a repetition of his famous account of the manners of the buffalo, seen at a menagerie. After describing on a gigantic scale, the bodily proportions of this animal, he would proceed to imitate fully to his own satisfaction, its various cries and bellowings ; and—having been purposely placed by the side of some very young member of the club—and therein lay the cream of the jest—he would finally illustrate some of the buffalo’s actions, by suddenly seizing by the collar, with both his hands, his astounded neighbor, and butting with such ferocity into the breast and stomach of the man,

while he still bellowed quite terrifically, that shouts of applause and laughter convulsed his audience.

There was a naturalist, too, who gave a minute account of how barnacles are engendered, out of pieces of old ship timber, found floating in the sea, to the sides of which any curious observer might find them clinging in myriads; and another close inspector of wonders, who insisted that the sheet-lead used by plumbers, was manufactured out of a "certain" kind of sand; and, in fact, many and many were the miraculous things which, intoxicated with the important novelty of his situation, as well as with a too frequent, though almost unconscious use of another stimulant, Arthur Fennell enjoyed, and sat out; until finally even the most inured "good fellows" of the society began to prepare for going home, and as he tried demurely to wish them good-night, and pass with a would-be-staid step out of the room, they did not fail to remark, still for their own amusement, how flushed was the face, how meaningless the eye, how thick the utterance, and how drunken were the limbs, of the hitherto most particularly sober, and prudent, and respectable glover.

Although the club had dissolved at its very latest usual hour, it was still not late in the night, in fact, not eleven o'clock—and the night was a very beautiful one too. The moon shone bright and clear over one half of the streets, while it threw over the other half a broad shadow, terminating at its edges in grotesque and exaggerated likenesses of jutting roofs, gables, and old and new-fashioned chimneys and chimney-tops. No shop was open, and scarcely a light to be seen in the windows even of the private aristocratic houses of the little city; and not a human sound broke the stillness of the scene; for even at this early hour scarce a creature appeared abroad. But though human sounds were absent you could catch a few others: the flitting of the bat by your ears, the sharp bark of some stray or unhoused dog, the crisp chirping of crickets, as you passed close by a baker's shop-door; with above all the rush and fall of the river, near at hand, over its weirs.

When Arthur Fennell, emerging from the lane in which were held the sittings of his club, gained the main street, it was, however, soon filled with human sounds, indeed—those, namely, of his own loud laughter, as, with his hat

rakishly to one side of his hot head, he now staggered along, quite abandoning, in the confirmed intoxication caused by the open air, his late attempts to look sober, control his swollen tongue, and walk properly. "And oh!" he would cry—"Oh, that able-bodied sayman! and Nick Magrath, the buffalo man!" and he clapped his hands in very rapture, and still laughed out in roars. Turning the wrong way for going home, he arrived at the shambles of the town, before which stood some huge chopping-blocks, mounted on very long legs, and clambering up on one of these, he set his arms akimbo, and danced heartily upon it to his own whistling. Suddenly, however, he recollected that he really was not on the true road homewards; and so he clambered down from the chopping-block, and gained the street again; and now his drunkenness changed into another mode. And thereupon Arthur became observantly and sagely drunk. The bright, quiet, moonlight, and the quaint terminations of the shadows produced by it, were noticed; and though he felt half inclined again to laugh out at the fantastic shapes assumed by the edges of the latter, as they seemed to dance and intermingle before his eyes, still he was able to suppress the now unseemly impulse, and indulged on the whole in a grave contemplation of the wonders of nature and of art.

He arrived at the market-house or tholsel, and struck by its little pillars and arches, sat down a short time before it, fully to gratify his architectural tastes; and—"Yes," he cried, in his locally patriotic enthusiasm—"Yes, let them look at that!—they may talk of their Dublins, and their Londons, and their ould Romes, and other foreign places—but let them look at that, I say—there it's for them—(hiccup)—there it's for them, before their eyes, to look at for a patthern—(hiccup)—!"

He arose from his sitting posture on the cold stones, and wending still homewards, gained the middle of the bridge, beyond which he had to proceed but a few yards to his own door. Here, in the moonlight views up and down the banks of the crystal stream, which the bridge spanned, Arthur had, indeed, subject for observation of the beautiful in nature; and though but vaguely responding to its calls upon his notice, he yet stopped short to admire and mutter his admiration to himself. The unusual novelty of foot-

steps sounding through the silence around him, startled our friend, and he looked backward and forward; two women approached him, advancing from the centre of the town in the direction he had himself come.

Drunk as he was, Arthur immediately recognised these persons. They were sisters, living in his own street; the elder a widow, who even during the lifetime of her husband, had, perhaps, more than indicated to Arthur, though to his utter disgust, approval of his well-proportioned figure and handsome face; and she had not been otherwise a woman of interesting character. But, upon this unfortunate night, Arthur forgot everything unpleasant in her past life, only recollecting, for the first time, with vanity, her former flattering attentions to him.

So, when the ladies stopped in a neighborly way, to bid him good-night, Arthur politely returned their salutation. They mentioned that they had been to a very pleasant evening party in the town, which was the cause of their being out so late. Arthur answered with a description of the happy evening he had himself passed, at the Charitable Society; and accounts of the respect shown to him there, and of the able-bodied seamen, and of the buffalo man, and then of the beautiful pillars and arches of the Tholsel, followed; and next came his reasons for suddenly stopping on the bridge, as he motioned up and down the river, speaking fast and thick; at which his neighbor, the widow, replied in a poetical vein, her hand resting on his arm, and Arthur admiring that hand, and then its owner's face, in the moonlight, thought and said, that both were very handsome;—and finally, at the lady's pressing invitation, he agreed to see her home to her door; and when they arrived at it, Arthur further agreed to step in and take a little bit of supper—a proposition to which his drunken stomach immediately yearned.

About four hours afterwards, he was rushing from that house, out of a fevered and hideous sleep! He ran wildly, and still staggering, though now not with intoxication, up and down his peaceful little street. His hands and his teeth were clenched, his lips apart and frothy; his eyes distended, bloodshot, and fixed, and all his other features haggard and rigid. His dress was disordered too, and he was bare-headed, and he often fell on his knees, groaning

miserably, tossing his hands, and beating his breast. In fact, the heavy throes of remorse, shame, and despair, were upon him; consciousness of unpardonable sin, of a breach of his marriage vow, and towards his own beloved, fond, and chaste-hearted wife. "Never, never can I again raise my face to her face," he resolved in his own heart and mind, "no, nor to the face of any human creature—I am a lost man—and something here," again striking his breast, "tells me that the life will not stay long in me, to be shameful to any one."

Becoming in the wretched quietness of despair a little calmer, he walked to his own door, stealthily looking to either side, and before him, to ascertain if any chance passenger might be at hand to observe him; but he was still alone. He stood at the door, and raised his hand to its knocker, but turned from it again. Over and over, he came back, and over and over walked away from that hitherto happy threshold. At length, now very feeble, and with a deadly heart-beat, and leaning against the walls of the houses for support as he came along, Arthur dared to knock; but so weakly, that those within could not have heard him. After a horrible pause he ventured to repeat the summons.

He heard a footstep inside, and bent down his head upon his outspread hands. The door opened, and his wife's old aunt appeared, holding a light. After one look at him, she started back. He staggered in, and without a word sank exhausted in a little parlor to one side of the entrance passage. The old woman followed him, greatly terrified.

"The Lord preserve us, Atty, my darling," she began, "what's the meaning of all this? and what has happened you? Why, your very lips are as white as paper, and there is something like death in your face."

"Is there, aunt?—death!—I'm glad of that—and glad that you can see it so soon." He spoke hoarsely, and in gasps, while his hand was held tightly over his chest. "And there ought to be death in my face."

"The Lord be good to us! tell me, Atty, what has come over you?"

"Is—is Fanny—is my—is she in bed?" he asked.

"Och, yes, Arthur; in bed these four hours, and more;

she was complaining a little, and I persuaded her to lie down."

"About four hours ago," he repeated, and a low shuddering moan escaped him. "Aunt Mary, will you make up the little bed in the back-garret for me? for I won't lie down, this night, or this morning rather, in any other bed—no, nor any other night, nor any other morning."

"Arthur Fennell! tell me, I bid you—as Fanny's nearest living relation, I bid you tell me all."

"Listen then," and in a hoarse, croaking whisper, he did tell her all; adding—

"And so, Aunt Mary, you now see that I can never again lay down my head on my pillow in my good wife's bed;—no, nor ever kiss her lips;—no, nor ever put shame even on her little hand, by taking it in mine, no;—I am a thraitor to her and to my God; and the only thing I can hope to do, before the death, you saw in my face, relieves me, is to try, and pray to Him to have mercy upon my sinful, sinful soul."

His old confidante heard the poor fellow's admissions at first, certainly in anger, but quickly after in full compassion. She stared at him, and the expression of his face, manner, and actions seemed ominously to confirm his heart-uttered forebodings of death. She trembled and wept profusely, and at length said—

"No, my poor Arthur, no; you must not quit your own old bed; you are very sorry for what has happened; and it is your first falling off; and the God you ask forgiveness of, will forgive you; and Fanny will forgive you too, and you are very ill; so come up with me, I say."

"Indeed and I am sick, dear aunt, and want to lie down in a bed, but not in the bed you speak of; no, never, never; and as you, may be, think it a trouble to make up that little garret bed for me, I will try and make it up for myself."

He half arose from the floor.

"Stop, Atty dear—the garret is damp, and the bed is damp, and you will do yourself harm."

"Too good, too good, for one like me; give me the light, aunt." He scrambled up to his feet.

The old woman was obliged to follow him with the candle, still weeping and shaking. At the bottom of the little

stairs he slid off his shoes ; and crept upwards, and particularly by the door of his wife's bed-room, with the caution of a thief. The garret bed was arranged for him, and he wearily fell into it, hiding his face and head in its covering.

The afflicted attendant withdrew, with still streaming eyes, to her own place of rest, not able to make up her mind, at such an hour, to awaken her neice, and tell her what had happened. Fanny, about to get up, at her usual morning time, missed her husband, and perceived that he had not the previous night been in bed. Greatly alarmed, she quickly sought an explanation from her aunt. Still, all the poor old creature could force herself to say, was, that Arthur, on his late return home, had found himself ill, and lain down in the garret bed.

Fanny flew up stairs. His head was still hidden under the bed-covering. She spoke to him, and was answered only by broken-hearted moans. She gently withdrew the covering. She saw his collapsed, and indeed death-stricken features. His white lips moved rapidly, but his sunken eyes were closed hard—he dared not, fulfilling his own fearful foreboding, look up at her. She peered closer, and there was blood about his mouth, and large blotches of a stained the sheets. She screamed, and threw herself by his side, beseeching him to say what ailed him, and offering every endearment of affection, which, to her astonishment, were all refused ; and then he muttered a few words : “ No, no, no, my own darling—do not touch me—do not come near me—do not speak to me—I do not deserve it—but go down stairs, and say to Aunt Mary that I bid her tell you everything that I told her.”

His wife soon acquired the necessary information ; again ran up to his bedside, “ And is that all,” she said, smiling and crying together, “ is that all, to make you turn your face from your wife and your God, and lie down to die in this unwholesome garret ? Arthur, it was not your fault—it was not your fault, Arthur, dear ! you were not master of yourself—and you were tempted, Arthur—come, look up at me, Arthur—I forgive you from my heart—this very instant I forgive you—only look up and smile, Arthur !”

But he only could answer, “ I cannot, Fanny ; I have sinned terribly against God and you, and never, never am I to hold up my head again.”

A fresh effusion of blood followed. Physicians were sent for. They advised quiet and repose—the very things unattainable by their patient. In a few days his heart again partially freed itself, by still another erring and wasteful flow of its vital fountain. The physicians now advised a visit with all speed from his clergyman. Father Connell attended the summons. He found, indeed, a sincere penitent, hopeful of forgiveness in another life, but shudderingly shrinking from a continuance of existence in this world. The old man wept like a child at the sight of the dry-eyed anguish of the wife, as, before his departure she came in, at his wish, again to try her power in cheering and comforting; and he witnessed the first kiss, which, since poor Arthur's falling off, he could bring himself to receive from his wife's lips. Going down stairs, the priest was beset in his way by his little chapel pet, Neddy, who, crying bitterly, saw him to the street door. He squeezed the boy's hands tightly, over and over, and told him he would come back early next morning—it was now far in the night. He kept his promise. Neddy again met him at the door of the house.

"Well, my child," asked the old priest, "and how is he to-day?"

"Dead, sir," answered his favorite, flinging himself against the inquirer's knees.

CHAPTER IV.

WHEN Father Connell first undertook the care of the parish in which he ministered until he died, the whole code of penal laws against Catholics was in full force, and, according to one of them, no papist could impart literary instruction, either privately or as a teacher in a public school, without subjecting himself to fines and imprisonment. Yet, under hedges in by-ways, and in gravel pits, or in confidential, or in lonely suburb houses, contraband education was stealthily whispered to ignorant youth and childhood.

The predecessor of Father Connell had contrived to found and maintain, on a very humble scale indeed, in a cabin in the outskirts of the town in which he lived, an illicit seminary for the instruction of the poorer children of his flock, and by great exertion, and many stratagems, his successor endeavored to follow up his example—though, indeed, by this time of day, much of the good man's precaution might have been spared; for the unmerciful and wanton law, which doomed to helpless ignorance an entire population, had for many years been looked upon as too barbarous to be literally observed; so that—thanks to the self-asserting principle of justice in the general human bosom—even the very magistrates appointed to enforce the unholy statute, winked at the smuggling system of education which was going on almost under their eyes.

And something like better days now began to dawn on the efforts of Father Connell. In the year 1780 this law was repealed. Little ragged papists could at last go to school openly and legally, and shout as shrilly as any of their Protestant contemporaries, when let loose from its threshold. Our priest, therefore, determined to erect, in the shabby straggling suburb in which was his own poor dwelling, an absolutely public school-house for the instruction of the children of the indigent.

The question, however, soon presented itself; where could funds be obtained to purchase even the materials for building the contemplated edifice?

In truth he did not know. Private means he had not; in fact, his daily extravagance in giving often left himself a creditor for his dinner; so he pondered seriously for some time, until at length a happy thought struck him, and with a mixture of simple and great glee of heart, and yet as great perseverance of head, he proceeded to carry it into effect.

Might not the poor urchins themselves be made contributors to the uprearing of a building to be appropriated to their own advantage? To be sure they might; and working his hands together, and smiling to himself in the solitude of his little parlor, he at once went to work on his project. He purchased for the poorest of his future scholars a great many wooden bowls; others of them provided themselves with some such implement of industry;

and in a short time, almost all the ragged little fellows in the parish might be seen running here and there like a swarm of bees—not indeed in quest of honey, but of a few straggling stones, wherever they could be found; and when these were obtained, heaping them into their wooden bowls and other utensils, and then trotting with their acquisitions to a place appointed for the accumulation of a grand pile, destined for the erection of their own parish poor school.

These small laborers had received strict injunctions, to appropriate solely such stones as they should meet scattered along the roads and suburb streets, and which could not be called the property of any particular person. Yet it has been rumored that when a scarcity of unclaimed material began to prevail amongst them, our zealous purveyors were not over nice in ascertaining whether this or that stone belonged to this or that individual; nay, we have it on authority, that a good many infringements on private property were committed by them; certainly without the knowledge of Father Connell, as we trust need not be stated. And it also became impossible that among the heterogenous mass of stones, great and small, now rapidly swelling in bulk, the owners of the unlawfully abstracted portions of it could recognise any evidence of the theft perpetrated on his or her old wall or loose enclosure.

No matter; after some time the heap increased to a magnitude fully equal to the hopes and to the architectural plan and calculations of our good priest; and greater than ever was his glee on the occasion. It might indeed have been whispered by shrewd commentators, that the great pyramid before which he now stood with admiring eyes, was not composed of stones of the best quality, or best suited to the purpose for which they had been intended; the greater part of them being in truth little better than pebbles. Other critics whispered that such as they were, they had cost Father Connell nearly, if not altogether, as much as good square blocks from the quarry might have been purchased for; and indeed such was the fact.

But great had been his delight in observing from day to day, the questing excursions of his little stone-gatherers; there was, he argued to himself, industry, and therefore utility in the whole proceeding; and then the pigmy

laborers seemed so brisk and happy at their task, that their childlike, though not childish employer—for there is a mighty difference between these two epithets—fully entered into their feelings, and he and they became the best friends in the world. And hence few of them ever went home of an evening empty-handed; a dinner or some pence rewarded the day's exertions; and from these circumstances very plausibly arose the conjecture, that apart altogether from the quality and fitness of his big heap of stones, the priest had, even in a pecuniary point of view, no great bargain of it in the end.

Another heap of another description of building material was now necessary—namely one of sand, and for this the bowl bearers were also sent out to quest—and exuberant success again crowned their efforts—although cunning judges still hinted that this acquisition, as well as the former one, had been bought dearly enough.

But however all this might be, what with well-begged donations from every class of society within his reach, and contributions from his own pocket, whenever by chance he found a spare shilling in it, before twelve months since his first thought on the subject had elapsed, Father Connell's grand public school-house was erected, to the wonder and admiration of his Catholic parishioners, and to the unutterable grievance and abomination of some of his dissenting ones; the important object of interest on both sides being meantime nothing but a thatched house, though more substantial and better appointed as to the size and fashion of its two front windows, and its door and doorway, than the more reverend cabins with which it grouped, and containing only two apartments on the ground-floor. If the critics on the occasion of the uprearing of this public edifice were at present alive, we wonder what they would say to the beautiful Catholic college now nearly finished at the aristocratic end of Father Connell's native city, and already inhabited by Popish ecclesiastical students, walking under handsome colonades, in academic caps and gowns. Well—to say no more of the pretensions of Father Connell's parish school-house, there it was, and in a short time a goodly throng of the future ragged men of Ireland were assembled in it; and it had been in existence

twenty-five years at the time when we first introduced its founder to the reader's acquaintance.

The present teacher of the establishment had been a pupil in it from his infancy to his early youth ; and as it was customary with our priest to select, from amongst his scholars, the one most distinguished for learning and good conduct, to be promoted to the very desirable station of "priest's boy," Mick Dempsey became at about sixteen years the object of his priest's patronage in this respect ; and after proving under his own roof, until the boy was a boy no longer, Mick's confirmed morality and exemplary behavior, the good man then pushed forward the humble fortunes of his late servant, by appointing him head teacher, master, in fact, in the school-house in which he had so long been a pupil—king of the realm where he had once been a subject.

And Mick was now a very well-clad monarch indeed, within the very walls which well remembered his former tattered inferiority ; and we mention this pleasant progression of the young man's luck in the world, that we may have an opportunity of relating a circumstance in connection with his present new clothes, which took place between his patron and himself.

Every Thursday the parish priest and his curates used to attend, in their very humble little chapel, for the purpose of instructing the poor children of the parish, principally composed of the pupils of the school-house, in their catechism ; and, during Lent, every evening after vespers was devoted to the same purpose. The curates each taught a class ; but as the number requiring instruction was large, and made up of different ages and capacities, it became necessary that these clergymen should have lay assistants, who were also appointed by Father Connell ; and while the boys on the earthen floor of the chapel, and the girls on the galleries, assembled in little groups, each group attending to its own instructor, the parish priest walked up and down, from place to place, now superintending the business of one class, and now of another. Amongst the lay teachers, the master of the school-house held of course a superior rank ; and, after his appointment to his new office Mick Dempsey fulfilled his duty in the chapel as faithfully, and as well, as his duty in the school.

For some time before the occurrence of the little scene we are about to describe, Mick had been attired indifferently enough ; but on a certain evening in Lent, in the dimly lighted chapel, Father Connell having listened to, and observed, as usual, his catechism classes, one after the other, and reprehended or encouraged, as the case might call for, suddenly remarked a tall and exceedingly well dressed young man, in the centre of a circle grouped round him, very fitly discharging the office of teacher. The old clergyman stopped short and looked hard at the young man, standing at some distance from him. "Who was he?" questioned Father Connel—"was he a stranger, or had he seen him before?"—he thought he had ; yet the dress, and even the air of the individual (for new clothes, when a rarity, do alter for the better even the very mien of their wearer) seemed quite strange to him. The person's back was, however, at present, turned to our priest, and he longed to look into his face ; but feeling that it might be an indelicacy in manners to go at once up to him and stare into his features, he walked down the chapel, as if quite unobservant, yet turning his head every now and then in curious criticism ; and presently he made a wide circuit, that the object of his interest might not suppose he was rudely inspecting him ; till, at length, by prudent management, he stood face to face before his own schoolmaster, Mick Dempsey. And now he opened his smiling blue eyes, and contracted his brows, and poked forward his head, from its usual erect position, and drew it back again, and stood straight as ever, and smiled and smiled until his whole countenance lighted up—the degree of severe authority which he had thought necessary to assume in it, as befitting his character of inspector of the catechistical instruction, quite subsiding ; until, finally, he nodded with undisguised delight, and almost with familiarity, to his quondam "boy," now attired from head to foot in a "spick and span new suit" of elegant clothes.

But, anon, he bethought that the young observers around him might notice his raptures, strange and unaccountable to them, and that such an exhibition might not, in their eyes, be seemly for the place and the occasion ; so he suddenly resumed his former austere bearing, and addressing his schoolmaster, said aloud—laying a particular stress

on the first word, and using much courtesy of manner—"Mister Dempsey, I shall be glad to see you below in my house, when the teaching is over; and don't fail to come, Mister Dempsey; I have something very particular to speak about, sir."

"I'll attend upon your Reverence," replied the well-pleased, though puzzled *Mister Dempsey*; and more puzzled was he when the old priest moved the lids of one of his eyes into an action, which could not indeed be called that of a wink, for we doubt if he had been guilty of such a thing since his ordination—but still moved them in a fashion which very much resembled a wink; and then he turned away from Mick Dempsey, to pursue the routine of his business of the evening, still looking back, however, very often to the person who had so charmed him, and whenever their eyes met still nodding and smiling.

The evening's instructions terminated; *Mister Dempsey* followed Father Connell to his house, and found him anxiously awaiting his arrival.

"Mick, Mick, is that you? Is that you, Mick?" began the priest, gently rubbing his hands within each other, and again smiling with peculiar pleasure, while he dropped the term *Mister*, which he had deemed fit to assume in the chapel.

"Indeed, and it is myself sure enough, sir," replied Mick.

"Upon my word, Mick, very good—very good indeed, Mick, upon my word,—turn round, Mick, my good boy, till I can have a full view of you; very nice, very handsome indeed; and very good, Mick, I declare you *are* a good boy; I do declare you *are*—a very good boy;" and while thus addressing Mick Dempsey, he turned the young man round and round by the shoulders; now viewing him in front, now in the back, and now upwards and downwards, and in conclusion walking round about him, and clapping his hands softly together and laughing outright.

"And now, Mick," he continued, more seriously, after indulging his joy; "now, Mick, I like that! It shows that you don't throw away your little savings; and isn't it a fine thing, Mick, for a good boy to buy elegant new clothes for himself, and look so decent and respectable in them, and not lay them out on whiskey, or cock-fighting, or dancing-houses, isn't it a fine thing, Mick?"

"Indeed, sir," answered Mick, somewhat astray as to the term he should use in assenting to his own eulogy, "I think it's a great deal better than to use them in the other ways you make mention of, sir."

"Sit down, Mick, sit down, my good boy—Peggy!" and here Father Connell cried out as loud as he could, and the burley person of his housekeeper appeared in the doorway of the parlor. "Come in, Peggy, and look at Mick Dempsey's new clothes, Peggy, aren't they very nice, Peggy? and all bought with his own earnings; aren't they very nice, Peggy?" and he again made Mick Dempsey revolve on his axis, for Mrs. Mulloy's inspection, who with her hands and arms thrust up to her elbows in her capacious pockets, critically analyzed her former fellow-servant's outside, and then happening to be in something like good humor on the occasion, Mrs. Mulloy pronounced Mick Dempsey to be a first-rate bean.

"Bring Mick Dempsey a drink of ale, Peggy," continued Father Connell. "'Pon my word I think he deserves a little treat," and Mrs. Mulloy not demurring, a pewter vessel of ale was shortly placed before Mick, who drank from it to the health of his entertainer, and to that of Mrs. Molloy also; and here be it noticed, that to a measure of good ale was limited all the libations in which our priest indulged his favorites, or himself.

Mrs. Molloy retired to her kitchen, and a silence of some moments ensued between Mick Dempsey and his patron, the latter steadfastly regarding Mick, though now evidently in a fit of abstraction, for his old eyes opened and shut very fast, and his well formed and handsome old lips, although uttering no sound, tried to keep up with them. At length, his face unbending to its former glowing smile, he re-addressed Mick in a confidential whisper—

"Now, Mick, don't you think that something handsome, and respectable, and a little like what gentlemen wear, would be very becoming, with the new clothes, Mick?—a watch now, Mick, suppose a watch! don't you think so, Mick?"

The schoolmaster shrewdly guessed to what the question might lead, but fiddling with the vessel from which he drank, he only assumed great innocence and unconsciousness, as he said:—

"I have no more money left, sir, and a watch would be too dear a thing for me at the present time, sir."

"And yet for all that, Mick, the watch would show off the new clothes right well;—and so, my good boy, listen you to me. I told you before that I did not like to see young men spending their money in public-houses, or dancing-houses, or such resorts; I believe in my heart, indeed I know well, that almost all the misfortunes that befall young people, are to be met with in places of the kind; but I do like, above all things, to see a young boy, or a young girl either, dressed well, ay, even a little above their station, Mick, because that shows that they have a respect for themselves; and self-respect, Mick, will surely obtain respect from others. And now, Mick, because I brought you up, and because I see that you are careful, and don't spend your money badly, and because I am sure that your good conduct gives good example, I will take on myself to bestow a token of my encouragement and approval, where I think it is so well due. I'll give you the watch myself, Mick, to wear with your new clothes; and you may tell the people when you take it out of your fob to see the hour of the day—you may tell the people, Mick, that your poor priest made you a present of that watch; and you may tell them, too, all the reasons why he did so, just as you have now heard them from his own lips,—and when I am in my grave, and you show that watch as your priest's gift, it will do you no harm to be a little proud of it, and people may not think the worse of you for having deserved it."

As the old gentleman finished this earnest though simple address, tears trembled in his eyes, and while the person so complimented fumbled at some expression of his thanks, Father Connell put on his spectacles, and busied himself in writing a few lines, and when he had completed them, he folded the paper into the form of a letter, directed it, handed it to Mick Dempsey, and added:—

"Take this to Tommy Boyle, Mick," meaning by Tommy Boyle a wealthy and much-respected inhabitant of the town, fully of the middle age of human beings, on which, however, he still continued to bestow the appellation, by whom he used to address him a good many years before, when that person was only a boy; "take this to Tommy

Boyle, Mick; I have told him in it to give you a watch, to wear with your new clothes, which he will charge to my account: 'tis not to be an expensive watch, Mick, because I have not much money to spare; but I have told him to give you a watch to the value of four pounds; and when he gives it to you, which I make no doubt he will do, wear it for my sake, Mick."

The young man was sincerely thankful for this handsome gift, and now found words to express his feelings, promising that he would be careful of it in remembrance of the donor; and the ale being despatched, and the priest wishing to be alone, Mick Dempsey bent his head to receive the old man's blessing; and early the next day, a flaming red ribbon, indicative of his watch, was seen streaming down the school-master's right thigh, and he was often stopped in the street, but not too often to feel himself much annoyed at the circumstance, by humble persons requiring to know the hour of the day; indeed, he would very urbanely inform, upon that subject, any individual, man, woman, or child, who hinted, no matter how remotely, his or her anxiety about it.

CHAPTER V.

It was nearly a year after the death of Atty Fennell, that Father Connell paid a visit to his parish school. Christmas-day was near at hand, and the weather horribly and peculiarly cold, even for Ireland in winter; that is to say, it snowed a great deal, or it rained a great deal, or to try and reconcile the two rival whims of the amiable atmosphere, it sleeted even more than it snowed, or even more than it rained; and after that, by way of jocose variety, it froze hard for a few hours—following which the short-timed frost came down, as we natives say, in pleasing rain again; and all these things, it seemed happy to do over and over, while, through every interesting change, it blew keenly, all the same from every quarter; and the surface of the earth became upturned and uprooted puddle; and the

clouds, instead of sailing above the earth, at a convenient distance, absolutely sunk down upon it, or rolled familiarly over, or along it; and all places, and all vitality were humid, and shivering, and beyond human endurance, insufferable and abominable, in the land we sincerely love best above all the lands we have yet seen in this wide world. It must pardon us, however, this one little demur against its climate.

Father Connell's business to the school-house, on the present occasion, was to superintend the distribution, amongst the most deserving of his pupils, of certain clothing which he had purchased for them; indeed, if we said the worst clad amongst the poor creatures, we should be nearer to the real motive that guided him in his selection of objects for his benefaction.

About fifty suits of clothes awaited his arrival in the school-house, some of one calibre, some of another, and some of another; in fact, all selected, to the best of his judgment, as available to boys of from about five to twelve or thirteen. They were of nearly uniform material; namely, a shirt, a felt hat, a grey frieze jacket and waistcoat, a pair of worsted stockings, and a pair of brogues, with the addition of a very peculiar pair of breeches or small clothes, locally termed a "ma-a." And of course this word "ma-a" requires some passing explanation from us. It was, then, in the first place, bestowed on the portion of dress alluded to, as seeming to explain its pristine nature and quality, by imitating the bleat or sound uttered by the animal, from which the substance of the article had been abstracted. In good truth the "ma-a" was fabricated from a sheep-skin, thrown into a pool of lime-water, and there left until its fleshy parts became corroded, and its wool of course separated from it;—and with very little other preparation, it was then taken out, dried in the sun, and stitched with scanty skill in fashioning it, into something rudely resembling a pair of knee-breeches.

Such as it might have been, however, a "ma-a" was the general wear of the humbler classes in the district of which we now treat, and at a period considerably later than that with which we are concerned. Its manufacture engaged many hands, as the term is; but there is no such trade now; a "ma-a," alas! is not to be had for love or money. Let us, notwithstanding, before posterity loses sight of it

for ever, be allowed a little longer, on our gossiping page, to hold up unto general admiration this once celebrated piece of costume.

We are beside a standing, near the market-house, in High street, on a market-day, and upon it are exhibited "ma-as" of all sizes, from among which can be equally accommodated the peasant of six feet, and the urchin who dons his first masculine suit of clothes. Purchasers come up to the standing in turn; one experienced young peasant selects a "ma-a," which, when drawn over his limbs, reaches nearly to his ankles, although eventually destined to button just beneath his knees, thereby making sage provision against the drying of the article after the next shower of rain—which would be sure to shrivel it up to half its primary dimensions; so that if he chose one, extending, in the first instance, only under his knees, he must shortly find it shrunk up to about the middle of his thigh. Another gigantic "country boy," unacquainted with this collapsing propensity in the "ma-a," which it is the interest of the vender very often to conceal, chooses, on the contrary, the tightest fitting "ma-a" suited to his thigh and sinew, to make himself look smart at mass next Sunday, as is mentioned by the seller; it does, indeed, seem even rather too small—that which is so earnestly recommended to him; and to end all doubts on the matter, he and the trader adjourn from the standing, the debated article in the hands of the latter. We follow them across the street into a little, unfrequented, narrow lane, curious to observe their proceedings; and there we notice that, having persuaded the rustic would-be dandy to squeeze himself half way into the garment, the adroit "ma-a" vender gripes the article at both hips—himself being a very strong man, he tugs and tugs, with professional dexterity, lifting the half-ashamed peasant off his feet, at every tug, until, at last, forcing the over-strained small-clothes over the fellow's huge limbs, and half buttoning it at the knees, he sends him blushing and smiling away, with a slap on the thigh that sounds like one bestowed on a well-braced drum. But woe and treble woe to that skin-fitted and already straddling dupe! On his way home the rain falls in torrents—the sun then shines out fiercely; and by the time he arrives at his mother's door, he is a laugh-

ing stock to her and his whole family. The dandy "ma-a" has coiled up more than midway along his thighs, very like damp towels tightly bound round them.

Antiquarians!—and all ye lovers of the worthless obsolete!—forgive this digression, for you will sympathise with it.

Honestly to resume. Fifty shirts, fifty little felt hats, fifty frieze coats and waistcoats, fifty pairs of the now (we trust) immortalised "ma-as," and at least twenty-five pairs of stockings and brogues were heaped before Father Connell, in his school-house; and many more than fifty poor little creatures assembled, upon the coldest day that came that year, each hoping to be chosen as a fit claimant upon the bounty of his parish-priest.

On entering the school-room, the good man's compassion had been forcibly appealed to, as many of the almost naked children, ranged on the forms at either hand, turned up to his face (while their little bodies cringed, and their teeth chattered) beseeching, and yet doubting eyes, whose lids fluttered, and could not for a moment meet his questioning regard. In fact, he knew the meaning of these self-doubting, mute appeals of the wretched urchins, and his primitive notions of justice battling with them, he was made unhappy. For in truth his keen glance discovered, among the greater number of the wearers of the petitioning faces, individuals who were very irregular attendants in his school; whereas, the Christmas clothing had been publicly notified to be intended for the most regular visitants of it, taking always into account the most generally deserving also; so that he plainly understood that a great portion of the present expectants were not, in point of strict school discipline, entitled to the promised periodical favors.

And this discovery, while it grieved, also puzzled Father Connell. Rigidly, and properly speaking, these young outlaws and street-idlers, who daily sinned against his constant admonitions, deserved no such reward. Yet how could he send out again, into the snow, which drifted upon a cutting north-east blast, against the windows of the school-house, their little shivering carcasses? He turned his back upon them, looked out through the window at the weather, shook his head, prohibitory of the measure, while a few drops, too warm and fresh from the heart for that weather or anything else to freeze, stole from his winking

eyes. He quitted the window and walked up and down the school-room, pondering over the difficulty in his way. He sternly regarded the young vagabonds again and again; and, as if in answer to his every look, they cringed together, more and more piteously. What was to be done?—and he resumed his walk up and down the room; and finally stopped short again, nodded, but now approvingly to himself, and quite upright and austerely, went to Mick Dempsey and addressed him.

“Mister Dempsey,” for in this style already noticed, he always spoke to Mick, in the presence of his pupils; “Mister Dempsey, I’d be thankful if you call over the list of your regular scholars, and then let every boy who answers to his name, come down to this end of the school-room;” and he bowed and waved his hand to Mr. Dempsey, while pronouncing aloud his last request.

Mr. Dempsey obeyed the command; and when the muster-roll had been gone through, more than twenty, alas, of unfortunate young scamps, not comprised in it, remained huddled together at the other end of the apartment, with what looks of bitter disappointment must be imagined.

The priest then took Mr. Dempsey by the arm, and led him into a corner, where their whispered conference could not be overheard.

“Mick, the poor children below are strangers to our school, ar’n’t they, Mick?”

“I hardly ever saw them here before, sir; and now they only come to impose on your Reverence for the Christmas clothing.”

“Mick, this is bitter weather, and the unfortunate little wretches have scarce a tatter to cover them against it, my good boy.”

“But they have no right to get the clothes, sir, from our own regular boys.”

“That is true; very true, Mick; and I know it is a bad example to encourage the idle to the loss of the industrious; so that I believe, to speak honestly and fairly, they ought to be turned out into the snow, without getting any clothes at all. But, Mick, they’d perish, they’d perish in this severe weather, they would indeed, poor little creatures—they’d perish, Mick;” and he took the schoolmaster’s

hand and squeezed it, and shook it, and looked into his eyes appealingly, as if he would turn him from the rigid justice of the case, to its more merciful side.

"It would be a cruel thing, Mick," he continued, "to send them out, to have the snow and the biting wind going through their naked bodies?"

"It would indeed, sir, but—"

The priest stopped him, before he could go beyond the admission he sought for; he did not want to hear the other side of the question at all. "Well, well, Mick;—ay;" and he more emphatically squeezed the hand he held, while his old face grew bright again. "I think I see how we are to manage it;" and now he whispered certain instructions into the schoolmaster's ear, holding his mouth very close to that organ, lest a breath of the purpose of his plan should be overheard.

"Give me the cat-o'-nine-tails, sir," he said next, in a loud and tyrannical voice; and having received into his hands the awful weapon, he walked with a lowering brow, and a more than ever erect person, towards the now terrified candidates for attire which they had not deserved.

"You unfortunate little street-trotting sinners," he said, "how dare you come here to attempt to impose on Mr. Dempsey and myself? you have never come here before, or very seldom at least; and you have spent the time, you ought to have spent here, in idleness, and of course in sin; for don't you know, that idleness is the father and mother of sin, and that sin destroys both the body and the soul? don't you know all this, you little vagabonds? And yet, like the drones of the bee-hive, you would now devour the honey without having helped to gather it in; yes—you now come here to ask for rewards that belong to more deserving boys; but I'll give you your true reward; I'll flog every one of you, one after the other, and that will keep you warm; every one of you." Having delivered this oration in a tremendous voice, he flourished the cat-o'-nine-tails above his head, and all the offenders (except one, who stood in suppressed glee on the threshold of the doorway, half observant, and wholly prepared to escape into the street the moment it might become urgently necessary), all the offenders emitted an anticipating yell of torture,

and jumped up on the forms, or even on the desk, or knelt down, or rolled over each other on the dusty floor.

But the flourishing of the cat-o'-nine-tails was a signal agreed upon between Mick Dempsey and himself; and Mick, therefore, now advanced towards the seemingly enraged patron of the school.

"Come, Mr. Dempsey, have all these young cheats flogged one by one, for bad and idle boys, and for imposing on you and me."

Louder than ever arose the despairing shrieks of the culprits.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Mick, "but may be if you forgive them, they will be better boys for the future."

"Oh! we will, sir, we will—it's we that will!" shouted the score of impostors.

"I'm afraid there is little chance of that, Mr. Dempsey," gloomily demurred the priest.

"If his Reverence forgives you, will you promise to be good boys for the time to come?"

A new and overpowering assent was given to the school-master's proposition.

"Well; if I thought they would mend, I might be prevailed upon to forgive them," resumed Father Connell; "but is there any one here to go bail for them?"

"I will myself, sir; I'll be their bail to you that they will be good boys and attend to their school, sir."

"Very good; very good, Mr. Dempsey;—do you hear what the master says, ye young sinners?"

The persons addressed, failed not to answer that they did hear very well indeed, and their former pledges of reformation were once more uttered in a great clamor; tones of hope and pleasure at their relief from the cat-o'-nine-tails, now cadencing, however, their voices; and their priest, interpreting the result only in the way he had wished it to be, immediately rejoined—"Very well, very well, then I forgive you for the present; and Mister Dempsey forgives you; and I hope God will forgive you; so now, come with me to the other end of the room; come, my boys, come; come up here among the rest—there is more joy in heaven," he continued, as he approached the more deserving claimants for winter clothing, speaking in a loud voice, that they might hear him, and as solemnly, and sin-

cerely as if he addressed an adult congregation off his little altar; "there is more joy in heaven for the repentance of one sinner, than for ninety-nine just."

And now he distributed equally among the righteous and the unrighteous, as well as his judgment permitted, the pile of winter garments, "ma-as" and all. One of the very last, who shyly lingered to claim his bounty, was the boy whom we have mentioned, during the flourishing of the "cat-o'-nine tails," as standing upon the threshold of the school-room door—prepared to escape into the street, in case of emergency. And, in truth, this little fellow was, perhaps, the very least entitled to share in the holiday donations, for, indeed, he had never before been in the priest's seminary at all; and yet he seemed to want, perhaps, more than any of the half-naked petitioners around him, some protection against the bad weather. Father Connell had personally inspected the donning of his little gifts, and now did the same towards the boy before him. While the little stranger put on his new dress, tears were seen to fall plentifully from his eyes, and he suddenly glanced up into Father Connell's face. The old priest started, seized his arm, and led him close to a window.

"What is your name, my child?"

"Neddy Fennell, sir."

"Neddy Fennell! And are you the Neddy Fennell that used to fix my surplice on me in the sacristy, and hurt my foot by treading on it?"

"I am indeed, sir, the same Neddy Fennell."

"Poor child! how changed you are, then. God bless me! and I was wondering what had become of yourself and your mother, and your poor aunt!—after your poor father died, you know, I often went to see ye all, Neddy; but then came my absence from the parish, on business, for a long while; and then the bad fever, that left me weakly, within the house, for a longer time still; and it was only the other day I could creep out to ask after you, when I missed you out of the choir; and then your mother's house was shut up, and no one could tell me where you had all gone—only that great poverty had overtaken ye; and is this true, Neddy? And are ye so very poor, Neddy?"

"We are, indeed, very, very poor, sir."

"God bless me! poor child, poor child! and where does your mother live now, Neddy Fennel?"

"In a cabin on the green, sir."

"Well, Neddy, well; you'll show me where your mother lives, and I will go see her with you; wait for me until the boys go home by the bosheen, and go there you with them; but don't go home with them—don't go anywhere without me; poor child, poor child—I must see your poor mother. Now, Mick," continued the priest, again whispering the schoolmaster confidentially, "the snow-storm is nearly over, and I will go into the bosheen, where no one can oversee or overhear us—and I will wait at the churchyard gate, till you come up to me with the boys."

And in a few minutes the old gentleman occupied his post where he had mentioned it as situated—at the little gate of the churchyard of his chapel; and half secreted between its piers he now stood. "The Bosheen,"—a solitary and unfrequented green lane, running to his right and to his left.

For a few minutes he waited here, smiling to himself, and clawing the palms of his hands with his fingers; and anon, his ears were gratified by the expected sound of a great many little feet, softly tramping through the yet thin layer of snow, in the bosheen; and in a few seconds more, appeared Mick Dempsey heading his army of newly-clad pupils, who coming on in great order, only two abreast, formed a goodly column. They slowly defiled before their priest and patron, each as he came up, squeezing hard, betwixt his finger and thumb, the narrow brim of his little felt hat, chucking it downwards, and the head it contained along with it; and then abruptly letting go, that both might bob back again to their usual position, and so altogether performing a bow to his Reverence. And for every bow he got, every single one, Father Connell gave another bow, performed with studied suavity, though his face all the while glittered; and when the troop had quite passed by, he stooped forward, leaning his hands on his knees, to peep after them; and again standing upright, he clapped those hands softly together, and laughed, almost shouted forth his delight, while not tears alone, but little streamlets of tears, of happy, happy, tears trickled down his bloomy old cheeks.

It was some time before his outbreak of enjoyment permitted Father Connell's mind to recur to his engagement, with Neddy Fennell ; but now suddenly starting, he looked about him for his young friend ; saw the boy standing timidly and alone, at a little distance, walked hastily to him, seized him by the hand, and under his guidance went to visit the widow of poor Atty Fennell.

CHAPTER VI.

"THE Green," so called by Neddy Fennell, had not a bit of green about it, being a space, enclosed at three sides, by wretched cabins, and at the fourth side by the high wall of the county hospital, within which that sedate edifice stood. The cabins were tenanted by the poorest of the poor. Their thatch half rotten, and falling in ; with holes in their clay walls for windows, and holes in their roofs for smoke vents ; and if ever the semblance of a chimney rose above one of them, it was contrived of a kind of osier-work, plastered with mud. Upon the area of the ground thus hemmed in, presided disorder, and want of cleanliness, in many inert varieties : heaps of manure before each door, and everywhere about, carefully collected by the inhabitants, as their most considerable source of wealth ; little pools of dirty water, and puddle in all weathers ; stones, great and small, wherever they could find room ; while through these pleasing resorts pigs grunted and wallowed, vicious cur dogs barked, and gambolled, or else snarled and quarrelled, and bit each other ; miserable half starved cocks and hens stalked here and there, in quest of something to pick up, and found nothing ; and half naked, and sometimes wholly naked, children ran, shouting, and playing, and enjoying themselves.

Fronting the hospital gate, but nearer to the opposite side of the irregular square, the gallows destined for the reception of city malefactors of the highest degree, used, occasionally — yet, we are bound to say, very seldom, recollecting the mass of squalid poverty around it—to be

erected; and this was one feature of notoriety for the green, from which it improved on Neddy Fennell's appellation, and was once more emphatically termed Gallows Green. But there was also another trait of its celebrity, now to be indicated.

It had, time immemorial, been a kind of city corporate commonage. Everything with and without life might take possession of it; no questions asked; and the liberal indulgence was not long unacknowledged. When the hospital was being built, sand had been scooped irregularly, here and there, from beneath the surface of the green nearest to the edifice's site, so that, after its completion, and the erection of its boundary wall, hollows remained. Upon the verge of one of those, or haply at its bottom, some speculating vagabond pauper experimentally ventured to erect a hovel, still more wretched than the buildings enclosing three sides of the space around it. How he procured the materials, even for such a dwelling, Heaven and he know—not we. No one interrupted his proceedings, and he lived for years rent-free and tax-free; and in every way luxuriantly free, in his new house. His success emboldened others like himself to imitate his example; and in a few years, copies of his domicile, perhaps to the amount of one hundred or of one hundred and fifty, were to be seen on the edges, or on the sinking sides, or in the very depths of the old gravel-pits, and the population of the precious colony soon became very numerous.

To get into this jumble of miserable dwellings was a puzzle; to get out of it, once in, a still greater one; for it contained no streets, no lanes, no alleys, no enclosed spots, no straight ways, no level ways; but hovel turned its back upon hovel, or its side, or its gable, or stood upon the verge of an excavation, or upon the declivity, or at the bottom of one, as before hinted; so that a stranger venturing into the settlements in quest of any one or anything, could not know where he was going, or where to go, unless conducted by the hand of an initiated resident; as to escaping into the green again, without some such friendly agency, the thing was romantically out of the question, and if he were a tall broad-shouldered man, he must have squeezed his way through almost every random opening available for his progress. In truth, compared with the difficulties of

this labyrinth the enigma of "The walls of Troy," inscribed by urchins on their slates at school, was a mere nothing; and in our Charitable Society, from which the week's president was sometimes deputed to pay the locality a visit, it became jocosely fabled that a shower of houses had fallen—no time specified—from the clouds, upon this inhabited portion of Gallow's Green, tumbling here and there, helter-skelter, and so remaining to the period we speak of. And "the shower of houses" became a distinguishing title of the *quartier*.

A word as to the probable nature of the characters inhabiting "the shower of houses." At the first glance we recognise them as a set of unhappy creatures, all living in one way or another by chance. At the second, it is admitted that many among them were composed of individuals so modest as to retire occasionally from the notice of the mayor, magistrates, constables, and other nice critics of the adjacent city and suburbs; for once within the sanctuary of the shower of houses, a person of seclusive habits might sequester himself for any given time; the approach of an uninvited visitor spreading from house to house with telegraphic despatch, and the object of such a visit being helped at every hand, to lie secret or to escape; while it would have taken a *cordon militaire*, shoulder to shoulder, round about the colony, to prevent the egress of any one in it; as to catching amid its subtleties that "any one," you might as well—to use the boastful language of the natives themselves, you might as well "look for a needle in a bundle of straw."

It will of course be borne in mind, that we have sketched a place in existence about thirty-five years ago. "The Green," is at present very much improved. Some years since, its civic proprietors established a right of doing what they liked with its little Alsatia; from which circumstance resulted the fact, that the shower of houses vanished from the face of the earth; and—but we cannot indeed loiter to point out any of the other changes for the better, now visible upon Gallows Green.

Neddy Fennell stopped his patron before the habitation they had come to seek—one of a piece with all those around it. As Father Connell stood at its threshold, his hat touched the eve of its roof of rotten thatch. Its clay-built

walls were mouldering; its foundations crumbling away; there was not a good promise held forth by its whole appearance that it could adhere together for half an hour. To one side of its clumsy patched door was a badly shaped oval hole, the only vent through which, excepting the open doorway, the smoke from within could in mild weather get out, or the light, and the miasmatic vapor floating abroad, and called fresh air, get in. But in the piercing cold and pelting storms of the season at present, this hole was stopped with a mysterious bundle of old rags and straw, and the curiously contrived old door also shut.

The initiated Neddy Fennell raised its latch by tugging at a knotted string. Father Connell entered the dwelling, bending almost double in order to do so. He stood in the middle of a puddled earthen floor, upon which the thawing snow from above, oozing through the decayed or partially open thatch, dripped and splashed; not, however, without becoming tinted in its descent by the depositions of soot formed, time out of mind, upon the therefore blackened sticks that very infirmly supported the roof of the edifice, staining everything it fell upon into a dingy brown, and hence termed "soot-rain." The walls around him were bare clay, as bare as their outsides, excepting the fact of their being japanned with smoke.

The length of the hut, from end to end, might be about twelve feet. Quite along this extent ran a mud partition, not, however, reaching to the roof, and enclosing an inner apartment some two short paces in breadth, a doorless blank orifice in the dividing screen affording entrance into it. Against the gable, to our priest's right as he entered, a very little grate was contrived, ingeniously fixed in yellow clay hobs, and fashioned out of pieces of old iron hoops, obtained we cannot venture to affirm how or where; and in this grate burned, or rather brightly glowed a brisk fire—glowed we say, because the little balls of mixed clay and ashes composing its materials emitted no flame, but went on igniting like a kiln; not failing, however, to spread through the shut-up apartment—unsupplied of course with a chimney, a sulphurous, and otherwise choking vapor, which made any strange visitor cough and sneeze, much against his will.

Before the ardent little fire, and almost touching it,

squatted a middle-aged woman, dressed in rags and tatters, cooking upon a "griddle" (a round flat piece of iron), a cake which occupied the full space of her apparatus; and curious to relate, she was so happy in her den of seeming wretchedness, that she endeavored to shape her cracked voice into what was intended for a merry song.

Catching the sound made by the old squeaking door as Father Connell came in, the woman stopped short in her melody, though not in her cooking process; and without turning or looking behind her, jocularly shouted out—

"Ah, then, the devil welcome you, honey, and is that yourself?"

A step or two brought Father Connell close upon her. These steps did not sound like those she had expected to hear. She glanced sideways at the feet and legs which now almost came in contact with her own. The friend she had counted on, and for whom her salutation was intended, certainly did not wear black knee-breeches, and large silver buckles in his shoes. She looked quite up, and recognised the formidable hat and wig of her parish priest; and then, with surprising agility, up she bounced from her squatting position, retreated as far as the dimensions of her dwelling would permit, and there clasping her hands, gazed in terror at the old clergyman.

"I fear the word that is on your lips is in your heart," he said sternly, "sinful woman."

"Och, then, may the word choke me if—"

"Stop!—or I fear you may get your prayer; I fear you will die with that very word in your mouth."

"I won't—I won't, your Rivirince!—I'll die a good Christian."

"Well, well—God mend you—God mend you," and Father Connell passed into the inner chamber of her house.

Here, not able to see distinctly any object, he called at the orifice, through which he had squeezed himself, for a light; the woman without came with some burning straw in her hand, which only flared for an instant, and then left him in redoubled darkness. He asked for a candle, and unable to procure such a luxury herself, the dame tucked up her tatters and left the wigwam to hunt, as she said, "among the good neighbors for a scrap of one;" during

which hunt she did not fail to telegraph through the shower of houses, that their most dreaded enemy, their parish priest, was among them.

She came back, however, with something like the article for which she had issued forth ; by the aid of which her visitor now discerned two female figures stretched upon loose and damp straw, shaken into two separate beds, as it were, over the puddled earthen floor ; while their bodies were covered with some indefinable patchwork of shreds and rags, and while the roof over them now and then sent down heavy drops ; and one of these women was the Widow Fennell, and the other her aunt Mary. The old priest's blood ran cold ; his heart wept within him ; but he tried to keep down his feelings. Obtaining an old three-legged stool from the next apartment, he sat down on it at the head of the miserable couch, now occupied by the once idolized pet of a comfortable home ; took her little bony hand, and listened to her sad tale of explanation.

"After her husband's death," she said, "everything went wrong with her ; she was no good," continued her little, feeble, murmuring voice ; "she could only mope, cry, and fret all the live-long day ; and the wicked journeyman that Arthur Fennell left behind him, in his shop—God forgive her if she wronged him!—turned out to be a very bad man, making his own of the profits of her trade, and giving her no accounts ; and debts for stock laid in were asked for, and there was nothing to pay them ; and workmens' wages too were asked for, every week ; and as long as she could she tried to satisfy these demands, bit by bit, out of a little store of money which Arthur had saved ; and at last, when she had not another penny to give, real poverty came upon her and her aunt ; the interest of her house, her furniture, all was sold and swept away ; and her aunt and she sank lower and lower, changing from one poor lodging to another, until, at last, they were obliged to seek refuge in the place where Father Connell now found them. "We have very little to live on this time back, sir—very little indeed ; nothing but what we are allowed weekly by the good members of the Charitable Society, as the widows of tradesmen—as much as they can give, sir, but still very little between my aunt, and the little boy, and myself ; and out of it we must pay two shillings a week, for the corners

we are lying in, and the rest barely keeps the life in us ; and—whisper, sir—the old woman and I, poor as our food is, stint ourselves that we may give Neddy something like enough to ate. And oh! Father Connell, this kind of bed I lie on is worse to me than it would be to people always accustomed to such poverty, and to my poor Aunt Mary too : indeed and indeed, sir, the could of the flure numbs me, and I feel very, very chilly and miserable, day and night—shivering all over, and never warm as I used to be formerly ; and then the ould covering over our bodies is very thin ; and the rain often drips down on us, so that my very bones get sore, and I have no rest ; and whichever way I turn, is all the same, sir.”

Here the Widow Fennell moved herself on her straw. Part of her squalid coverlid fell off her shoulders ; and Father Connell saw that her body was quite naked. He started up from the three-legged stool, paced to the second couch occupied by her aunt, and ascertained that the aged woman was in the same condition. Acting upon an impulse, but one which before now he had often fully obeyed, when the sex of the poor object permitted, Father Connell walked quickly to a remote nook of the comparatively long slip of dungeon, and was preparing, without observation as he thought, to disrobe himself of his very inner garment, when, glancing behind him, he was suddenly put in mind that he must not, at present, follow up his purpose. He next thrust his hands into all his large pockets, and finding nothing in them, strode up and down, moaning dismally. And, at length, forming a resolution, he alertly issued into the outer apartment—not, however, without taking the poor young widow’s hand again, squeezing it hard, and whispering to her—“I’m going from you, my child, but I wont be long away ; rest you here as quietly as you can till I come back.”

“Where are you, Neddy?” he called out ; the boy ran to him from one of the hobs of the densely glowing little fire ; “give me your hand, Neddy, and lead me out of this sinful place, as you led me into it ; and, after that, come home with me ; yes, Neddy, my poor little boy, come home with me ; but we will come back soon again to your mother—we will indeed, Neddy—indeed we will.”

CHAPTER VII.

IN quitting the abode, holding fast by Neddy Fennell's hand, Father Connell had no eyes for anything around him. He did not therefore perceive, that the woman he had first seen cooking her griddle-cake, was now sitting on her heels at the fire, along with another woman, habited very like herself; the friendly visitor, in fact, for whom she had mistaken Father Connell on his coming in; and who, during his conference with Mrs. Fennell, had really returned to her co-partner in a certain traffic, her body bent under a little sack, secured thereon by a hay-rope passing across her forehead.

Upon the meeting of the two friends, a subdued "whist!"—and nodding and winking towards the inner room, on the part of the cook, and then, whispering explanations at the fire, enabled them to sit quietly until the priest passed out—not, however, without disagreeable apprehensions of what might be his notice of them before he left their house. But he did leave it, paying no attention to them; and then, after a cautious pause to give him time to get far enough away, they ventured to indulge a few sneers and jests at his expense; turning by-and-by to other topics.

The two persons before us, were what is locally called "potato-beggars;" it should be added, potato-sellers too, as they certainly vended to good advantage the food received as alms. Amongst the farmer's wives, whom, in pursuit of their calling, they very often visited, one of them was in the habit of admitting that she "*went by the name*" of Nelly Carty, and the other by that of Bridget Mulrooney; and both used to tell pathetic stories of their large families of orphans, and how they were left alone in the wide world, without a "mankind to do a hand's turn for them on the flure," or to earn as much as a cold potato for themselves and their starving children. Copartners in trade, it has been said they were; joint owners of their crumbling hut they also were, and every article of its furniture had two mistresses; and in all the hardships of business, as well as in all its profits, they had share and share alike.

Perhaps the majority of the colonists of the shower of

houses, living upon chance as we have intimated, were made up of potato-beggars; as well, indeed, as were a good portion of the occupiers of all the miserable suburbs at that time surrounding our city; yet, none of them seemed dissatisfied with their social position; and, in fact, compared with the less brazen-faced paupers around them, who were ashamed to beg, little reason had these sturdy vagabonds to be so. If famine did not reign over the land, in consequence of the destruction, by an unfavorable season of the potato-root, "there was little fear o' them," as they said themselves; and a passing notice of the manner in which Nelly Carty, and Bridget Mulrooney drove their thriving trade, may prove the assertion, as regards the whole of their numerous and respectable body.

At break of day in winter, and at six o'clock during every other portion of the year, out sallied either one or the other of them; her well-patched bag of indefinite material chucked under her arm, leaving her helpmate at home, to take care of the house, and perform other necessary duties of the firm. And suppose Nelly Carty went out, Bridget Mulrooney had, compared with Nelly's responsibilities, a day of exquisite rest; and hence, by the way, arose the necessity of the extensive association of potato-beggars following their vocation, in couples at least, if not in trios, or quartettos. So, Nelly went out, and after clearing the town and its environs, traversed a pretty wide district, in mud and in mire, in sunshine and in all its contraries, hail, rain, snow, frost, fog, wind, and tempests, and so forth; along high-roads and by-roads, along *bosheens* and field-paths; over hedge and ditch, over hill and valley, until at last she succeeded in amassing in her sack a creditable load, amounting to about one hundred weight, gained by most plausible beggary from all the well-known farm-houses in her chosen haunt; and also very often from the cabins of the working peasants encountered on her way.

But Nelly was not such a fool as to carry her bag from door to door with any appearance of plenty in it. So soon as it began to assume a plethoric shape, she knew well some convenient spot in the open fields in which to deposit its contents; after which, she could bear it quite empty

and open-mouthed, and beseechingly to the thresholds next to be visited; and before evening fell, after receiving the "bit and sup," along with her usual donation of raw potatoes, at more than one of the truly charitable dwellings among which she quested, Nelly recurred, with the certainty of a raven, to the hiding-hole glanced at; secured the mouth of her now well distended wallet; passed a rope of hemp, or of hay over its middle, when she had poised it between her shoulders; repassed the rope across her forehead; then gained, by the shortest cut, a place of rendezvous on the high road, where she met perhaps a dozen of her sisterhood, though by no means in partnership with her, who there had sat down to rest a little while, after the happy termination of their day's ingenuity; rested, and smoked, and gossiped, merrily and loudly along with them; in their company walked home, bent double, though on sturdy bare red legs and feet; gained the rent-free and tax-free dwelling of which she and Bridget Mulrooney were joint-proprietors; entered it, and found Bridget prepared to afford her in every way a luxurious welcoming, after her tramp of at least fifteen long Irish miles; relieved herself, with her helpmate's joyous aid, of her formidable fardel, and sat down at the brisk little fire to become very happy. And the next morning Bridget Mulrooney went out with the bag, of course, and Nelly staid at home to enjoy *her* day of repose; and so, day after day the year round, the business of their concern was regularly carried on.

The shower of houses has passed away; not a trace even of the foundations—if ever they had any—of its hundred-and-fifty wigwags can be seen; but potato-begging has thereby suffered nought, either in popular estimation or in the numbers of its professors. To this very hour, towards the close of the day, detachments of the amiable sisterhood, homeward bound, and generally proceeding in single file, while they all gabble and laugh, and gibe, and shout to each other, from front to rear, may be encountered upon every high-road diverging from their native town. There is one of those roads, by the way, along which the good ladies do not trudge in very high spirits, but rather with clouded brows, scowling eyes, and muttering voices, and that one is the road to the left-hand

side, of which, just as it is about to join Gallows Green, a certain building now begins, with every promise of being soon finished, to erect its austere looking front—the district poorhouse, in fact.

But Bridget and Nelly are still before us, at their fire, provokingly inviting us to turn from a general notice of them to something more individual and domestic; and it was Bridget Mulrooney who had been out that day with the bag.

When they became quite assured that the priest was beyond hearing or observation, Nelly recurred to her griddle-cake, which, during his retreat into the inner apartment, she had not forgotten to take care of, and now found it done “to a turn,” and to her heart’s full satisfaction, as it exhibited on both sides the proper speckled surface of brown and white, which demonstrated her culinary success. She removed it from the griddle, cut it up into measured portions, and placed these on edge round the hob, to keep them still comfortably hot. She then put a short form in front of the smirking fire; and using a rickety old chair as a sideboard, deposited upon it her odd cups and saucers, as she called them—and indeed “odd” they were in every sense of the word, of different sizes, patterns, and colors; by their sides, or among them, one leaden teaspoon, a little jug with a broken nose, three white delft plates with blue edges, a wooden “noggin,” a little black tin tea-pot, and a wooden-hafted knife. This done, she drew out of one of her capacious pockets a flat bottle containing whiskey, which, when used as on the present occasion, is jocularly termed “colliery crame;” again from the same ample receptacle a small folded paper, holding one-quarter of an ounce of tea, and after it a second parcel somewhat larger, enveloping two ounces of intensely brown sugar. During her proceedings so far, a small three-legged metal pot had been boiling away gloriously, after the removal of the cake and the griddle, on the fire; with the aid of the wooden noggin she now abstracted from this pot, water to make her tea in the little dingy tea-pot; and, still continuing her allotted household duties, split the different portions of her cake with the wooden-hafted knife, and then heaped butter upon the insides of each portion, until the dainty was saturated through and through.

P'ending these preparations, Bridget Mulrooney, squatted on the floor, at one end of the short form, looked on at Nelly's process, with very pleasing anticipations, and asking a careless question now and then, and uninterruptedly extending the palms of her red hands and the soles of her red feet so closely to the fire as, by nice and habitual calculation, barely to avoid the uncomfortable result of having them blistered, enjoyed, it may be boldly affirmed, a position and situation of great bliss. Her day of labor was over; she was deliciously resting herself; she had not to stir in the performance of any household duty; abundant and cheering refreshment was close at hand; and she was not to go on the tramp for one whole day again—what earthly lot could surpass hers? Ask a queen!

Everything being in readiness, Nelly Carty also squatted herself at the end of the form opposite to which Bridget Mulrooney sat. The pair rubbed their hands in gleeish anticipation; and the pig, nestled in his corner, thrust out his snout from his straw, regardless of his mistresses, and good-humoredly grunted his satisfaction at seeing them so comfortable, and so near the point of perfect enjoyment.

Our hostess of the evening poured out the scalding hot tea, sweetening it well with the thoroughly brown sugar, and more than once sipping with the little leaden spoon from both the cups before her, to ascertain, as in duty and etiquette bound, the quality of the beverage, according to the judgment of her own palate. She next infused into each cup no stingy portion of the "colliery crame," which, as it gurgled through the neck and mouth of the flat bottle, so tickled the ears of both ladies as to produce a pleasant chuckle. And again the smiling Hebe of the feast stirred the compound mixture with her little leaden spoon, again took a sip out of each cup, wagged her head in approval of the final fitness of the beverage; and handing over one measure of it to her helpmate Bridget, cried out in a tone of utter joviality:—

"Here, my old duchess, will that lie in your way, we wondher?"

"That's nate tay, sure enough, Nelly," after swallowing a mouthful so hot and so pungent, that it obliged her to close her eyes during its descent through her throat;

"but I think yourself is as much of an ould duchess as I am, Nelly."

"Faith we're a pair of ould duchesses, Bridget, and much good may it do us, I say."

"There's them is worse off, Nelly, wid our good tay and our butthered cake."

"Well, well, Bridget, alanah machree, if you were lookin' at me to-day evenin' when the ould priest came in! By this same blessed tay, I thought the ground would open and swally me. Sure I thought that 'twas your four bones that lifted the latch; and so what does I do, but sings out, 'divil welcome you, honey,' to the face iv his big wig."

"Oh-a! oh-a! and what did he say to you, Nelly?"

"He has no good will to me of ould—and he tould me I'd die with that word in my mouth—but I won't—I'll die a good Christian yet, Bridget, as I tould him."

"And we'll all do that, Nelly, and why not?"

"If there's anything comes across you, Bridget, the grass won't grow under my feet till I hunt out the priest for you, and bring him to the bedside to you—and by coorse you'll do the like for me, Bridget?"

"By coorse, Nelly, by coorse; but tell me what's the rason that Father Connell would have an ould grudge against you, Nelly?"

"Faix, and that you'll know afore long, my jewel, if Nelly Carty's tongue doesn't get the palsy in it."

"Och, there's little dread ov that, Nelly."

"Divil a fear, my ould duchess, but wait a bit, ov you plase. *Go skurra dhuch naa kaol* goes one way, but I say, no story widout the supper."

A second cup of tea, precisely manufactured as its predecessor had been, was served out, and Nelly continued:—

"I b'lieve it's ten years agone sense you an' I kem together, Bridget. I lived on the Lake at that time, an' Father Connell has a mortil hatred to the Lake; and I was livin' under the wan roof with Tim Donohar—you know Tim Donohar, Bridget?"

"No, I never stopped on the Lake, Nelly, and so I hadn't a knowledge ov him."

"He goes by the name of Woodbine."

"Woodbine, enagh! And what do they call him by that name for, Nel'y?"

"He has wan good leg, Bridget, but the other isn't the fellow iv it; and he carries a critch at the side where the odd leg hangs; and if you war to see that leg!—it twists round the critch wan or two times, afther the manner iv the woodbine that grows in the hedges, and for the same raison they calls him Woodbine."

"He, he, he! divil a betther."

"Well, my ould hare, I lived under the one roof wid Woodbine at the time I'm goin' to tell about; and Tim and the whole of us liked a bit of mate well enough; so myself was out in the direction of Ballysalla, and there was as fine a dhrake as ever you could lay your two eyes on, and as nice a duck along with the dhrake becoorse, and the both were paddlin' on afore me; and shure it came into my head that they were tired, the cratures; they waddled over and hether at sich a rate; but sense that time I was often thinkin' it was the fat that made them hobble in their gate o' goin'—what do you think, Bridget?"

"Och! and it was the fat, sure enough—he! he! he!"

"Faix, and maybe you're in the right. Well, howsomdever, havin' the notion that they were tired, sure I said to myself I'd carry 'em a start, and enough to do I had to ketch 'em."

"Well, well; but sure that might put id in your head that they weren't tired, Nelly?"

"It never crossed my mind at that time, and more be-token there's no dependin' on a duck or dhrake. I often seen 'em undher a horse's foot, an' you'd think the hoof was down on their backs; and afther all, they'd twist out o' the way, like a cute ould eel, and there wouldn't be a feather touched."

"Well, afther a rale chase, shure I had my duck and my dhrake safe enough, and I puts one undher one arm, and another undher the other arm, an' draws the cloak over 'em, and I was goin' my way when the Widow Delouchry comes up to me, and she puts questions to me about the same duck and dhrake. Myself, said I, seen 'em crossin' the stubble-field a little while ago, but then up comes the Widow Delouchry's son to her help, and afther him her daughter—and they were all lookin' across the stubbles, when, my jewel, the threacherous duck cries out, 'Walk, walk, walk,' undher one arm, and her dhrake makes answer

to her undher my other arm ; and ochone, lanna machree, they tore open my mantle, widout sayin' by your leave, or how do you like it, and out they pulls misther drake and misthress duck fornent the world ; and I gets a slap on one cheek wid the dhrake, and a slap on th' other cheek wid the duck, and they falls pullin' me to babby-rags ; but afore they had me tore asundher entirely, up gallops Father Connell on horseback, and he thried to make pace ; and then, shure they tould him the whole story, and iv a sar-tainty he looked very black at me, and shuck his wig frightful to see, and yet for all that, the ould creathure of a priest wouldn't let 'em touch me any more, but tould me to make the best o' my way into the town ; and he overtuk me on the road, and he gave me the best of advice, and he made inquiries about my way of livin' and everything ; and shure I tould the poor man how the husband was dead, and how the childher war very badly off entirely ; and I didn't say I stopped in the house wid Woodbine at all, only I gave him the name of another place—and what would you have of it, Bridget ? when he came to help myself and the childher, he didn't find me where I said I had my lodgin'."

"Ho ! ho ! faix, and that was conthrary enough."

"Och, mostha, and the worst is to be tould yet, Bridget Mulrooney. Woodbine, as I made known to you, liked a bit 'o mate, and he was hard run for the same one time ; and Father Connell had two goats to give him crame for his tay, the poor genthleman, and Woodbine comes across the goats ; and as shure as you're planked there afore the fire, he brings the goats home wid him—so that becoorse we didn't want for roast and biled while they lasted. But, murder an' ages ! just as we were on the last of 'em, and it was purty late in the night when we were sittin' at the faste, the latch o' the door was riz up, my jewel, and in walks Father Connell his own self ! and shure the goatskins was hangin' agin the walls, and they sould the pass on us. Oh ! oh ! oh ! you wouldn't give threppence for our souls and bodies when we saw him standin' on the flure—we thought he'd ate us alive. But what do you think ? the poor foolish man spoke to us paceable enough, considhering we was afther devourin' his purty goats ; and before goin' away, he tould us the worst thing he'd wish us was that they might be cryin' 'mag-a-maa' in our stomachs ; and

now it's a down-right truth I'm going to tell you, Bridget, Woodbine and myself, and two more, used to hear the 'mag-a-maa' inside iv us every night for a long while afther.

"Well, Bridget, asthore, if Woodbine and the rest of 'em was in throuble from the priest, sure it's myself was in the rale, downright scrape. I thought to hide my head, rememberin' about the dhrake and the duck; but he knew me at the first peep, my honey—and though you'd think from the way he goes, that he wouldn't be able to take notice of you at all, his ould blue eye darts through you as a needle for all that."

"That's the truth, Nelly: we all know he has the sharp eye in his head."

"And yet, Bridget, if he seen the man that I seen to-day—though he has good rason to know that man well—keen as his eyes are, he could never call to mind who he was looking at."

"Arrah, d'ye say so! and who was that man, Nelly?"

"I'll till you then, Bridget, and you'll say it's a story worth harkenin' to. It's beyond thirty years ago, sence what I'm goin' to rehearse for you happened. There was a clane young boy, at that time, livin' not far from this very place, and he went by the name of Robin Costigan; and I was a very young girl then, and I'll say no more about Robin and myself at present;—only somehow it happened that Robin borrowed the loan of a horse, without axin' lave, and he was cotch on the back of that horse at a fair, in the Queen's County; and—but murther! What's that at the door o' the house?"

Neither of the dames had heard Father Connell impart to Naddy Fennell his intention of soon coming back that very evening to their domicile. After his departure with the boy, they had sat down, without fear of interruption, for the night, to enjoy their "tay," and had therefore secured, on the inside, their crazy door as well as they could. Hence, upon now hearing a loud thumping and kicking at it, considerable was their surprise, if not alarm. Up they bounced together, and together bawled out, through the chinks in their door, a questioning challenge to the unexpected visitors.

"Let me in, ye unfortunate creatures," answered the

tones of Father Connell's well-known voice, not angrily however.

Suppressing their screams, shouts indeed, if they had let them escape, one of the ladies hastened to hide away, as quickly as possible, all evidences of merry-making; while the second, with frank and hearty avowals of answering the priest's request, seemingly fumbled with great zeal to try and open the door; and when at last she did pull it open, great was her astonishment to see Father Connell and little Neddy pass in, each heavily laden with different kinds of burdens.

But, before continuing any longer this history, under the roof of Nelly Carty and Bridget Mulrooney, we suddenly perceive a necessity for premising why our parish priest took Neddy Fennell with him, upon a promise of soon returning to the lad's mother, and where they went together, and how they now reappeared burthened as has been noticed.

CHAPTER VIII.

STILL piloted by his friend Neddy, Father Connell had treaded his way through the shower of houses. He and his faithful guide cleared them, and the old man walking at so brisk a pace as almost to make the boy trot in order to keep up with him, the confidential pair halted before the outer door leading into the yard of the clergyman's residence. It was partially open, and Father Connell thought he should know the meaning of that circumstance; he said nothing, however, but crossing the yard to a little stable just opposite to him, unhasped its door as quietly as possible, and stealing in with his companion, who, no ways dull for his age, watched the priest's proceedings with much wonder, and perhaps some humor, took Neddy by the shoulders, placed him out of sight from any one passing by mounted with great agility a ladder in one corner, gaining by its agency a hay and straw loft, and after a moment's

delay handed down to his juvenile helper some four or five small bundles of fresh straw.

"And now don't stir out of that, for your life," he whispered, shaking his clenched hand at Neddy. "No, not a foot until I come back to you again, Neddy."

"Never fear, sir," answered the boy in a like cautious whisper, while he, in turn, shook his little fist in good mimicry, "I'm not the lad to budge on you, sir;" and his priest patted his head, and seemed very well pleased at having so excellent a colleague in his contemplated enterprise.

Then he hasped the stable-door upon Neddy; took out his latch-key and opened the door of his house; stood upon its threshold, and peered before him and to each side, with increased vigilance. There was no one as yet visible. He advanced a step or two, paused, again peered in every direction, and listened;—all was still, right, and safe. He trod on tiptoe into Mrs. Molloy's kitchen; it was seemingly quite untenanted. He took a candle off her kitchen table and dared to invade her bed-chamber. He stealthily stripped the blankets from her bed, and was also about to steal a heavy patchwork quilt, but conscientiously hesitated for a moment; and deciding, after much deliberation, that the greater portion of it might have resulted from her own industry and contrivance, and not from his pocket, finally resisted the sore temptation. Yet, after that, he approached Mrs. Molloy's wardrobe—an old trunk in which she kept all her more useful portions of dress—abstracted from its contents after much, and indeed not unpuzzled scrutiny, two nicely folded linen robes, of a certain description, rolled them up in her blankets, stealthily passed out again—his bundle under his arm—from her bed-room and through her kitchen, and as stealthily ascended a little, narrow, and very short staircase to his own sleeping apartment.

Here, the first theft he had to commit was easily got through; the blankets of his own bed were soon coiled over the pack he had already accumulated. But he also wanted a few shillings, and now some delay occurred. He placed Mrs. Molloy's candle on a chair, sat down on another, and gazed wistfully and debatingly at an old-fashioned piece of oaken furniture, partly writing-desk

and book-case, and partly chest of drawers. In one of its recesses was a little linen bag with a running-string, containing money begged exclusively for the support of his parish poor school; durst he fairly and honestly make use, for a time, of any portion of the contents of that little bag for any other purpose? He reasoned this case with his heart as well as with his mind; at last resolved that the call at hand was so urgent and peculiar that he indeed might do so—firmly promising to himself to replace with interest what he should now only borrow from the small hoard; and then he courageously appropriated the few shillings he had wanted and returned to the stable, there helping his youthful accomplice in this burglary on his own house to mount the straw on his shoulders, while he himself arranged to carry under one of his proper arms the goodly bundle plundered within doors.

In all his proceedings the good man was quite serious and earnest; while Master Neddy Fennell saw so much drollery in the whole affair that, in assisting with all possible gravity, as he was desired to do, in every necessary proceeding, a looker-on might have detected in his eye and manner signs of a waggish enjoyment, which, however, fully escaped Father Connell's notice.

But Father Connell had not been as successful as he imagined in avoiding observation. To be sure, as he had sagely surmised, upon finding the door of his yard open, Mrs. Molloy was not at home—the lady having “slipped out” for a little gossip with some of the neighbors. But she had left “the boy” boy behind in care of the premises, strictly charging him not to stir till her return, and then carefully latching the door of the house upon him, and purposely leaving the outer door ajar, that she might steal in at her pleasure, and ascertain if her sentinel was duly on his post.

As the evening was bitterly cold, Tom Naddy, the “priest's boy,” resolved to establish himself, while keeping watch and ward, in the most comfortable position possible, within the house—which, as every one knows, or ought to know, must have been upon one of the huge hobs within the capacious kitchen chimney. Yet he paused for an instant, refinedly canvassing the question as to which hob he ought to prefer to the other. That on which the cat

reposed he finally resolved upon preferring, and so displaced madam puss, and sat down exactly where she had been, his knees up to a level with his chin; and as some recompense to her for his unceremonious usurpation of her throne, he then fixed puss across his thighs, speaking fondly to her, and stroking her down, upon which his kitchen companion winked up at him with both her eyes, and began to purr gratefully. Thus established, the east wind might whistle, and the snow-flake might dance to the tune, but neither Tom Naddy nor the cat chattered their teeth in unison with it.

Tom Naddy began to dose. The sound of a latch-key turning in the door of the house, fully restored him to his powers of observation. It was either Father Connell or Mrs. Molloy who was about to enter. If Mrs. Molloy, he did not care very much; if his master, he did fear a remonstrance against sloth and idleness, accompanied perhaps by some hard pulling at his ears; so without absolutely disturbing himself, he prudently bent his faculties of hearing, to interpret to his own mind the sound of the footstep which must follow the other sound he had just heard. Be it remarked, that Mrs. Molloy had, as well as Father Connell, a latch-key to the house-door.

In one instant he became convinced that it was the priest who had come in; upon which discovery Tom Naddy had no resource but to cringe himself up along with his cat, into the corner of the hob he occupied, that fortunately being the one thrown into deep shadow by the side of the chimney opposed to the small taper on Mrs. Molloy's kitchen-table. The priest crept on tiptoe into Tom's presence, and for the reasons given, as well indeed as because his mind's eye had prepared itself for discerning solely the figure of his housekeeper, his "boy" remained quite unnoticed by him. But that boy did not, therefore, continue ignorant of Father Connell's larceny in Mrs. Molloy's bedroom.

Before going farther, there is a slight reason why you should be loosely sketched, Tom Naddy. You were, at this time, about sixteen or seventeen, though no one could venture to say as much by looking at you. You were very significantly described, by your homely neighbors, as a "hard-grown brat;" short for your years, and not making up in bulk what you wanted in height. You had a jaded-

colored eye, of which it was not easy to define the expression. It did not, we hope, mean dishonesty; for according to Lavater's rule, you looked straight into one's face; yet there was something in your glance, which made the philosophical observer curious to find out what that something was. Again, according to the sage mentioned, your nose had no hypocritical droop in it, but was on the contrary—a goodly broad snub; and a further and a greater puzzle about you was, that nobody could ever say, whether it was a smile or a grin, which always played around your fleshless lips. And moreover, Tom Naddy, there appeared no boyishness about you. To be sure you had a certain easy slowness in your whole manner; not *laziness*, as your poor master would have called it, but a peculiar self-possession, often broken up by an unexpected briskness; and you were not a person of many words, although you whistled a great deal—not, however, it is conjectured, for want of thought; because your queer face never looked vacant; and even while seemingly given up, mind and soul, to produce the full pathos of “Molly Asthore,” there used to be occasionally an abstract meaning in your eye, foreign from your harmony, and you would wink, or grin, or smile, or wag your white-haired head, in the very middle of the tune.

So, no sooner had Father Connell ascended to his own bedroom, than Tom Naddy, starting into one of his unusual instants of energy, very unceremoniously removed puss from his lap, darted through the open doorway of the house, and through that of the little yard also, and almost the next minute was shouldering into the cabin where he guessed Mrs. Molloy to be stationed, his assumption of briskness being, however, now forgotten, just as suddenly as it had seized upon him, while he moved very leisurely and whistled slowly and beautifully.

When he confronted her, Mrs. Molloy paused in the midst of a holding forth, her hand suspended in mid air, and her tongue, for a novelty, between her open lips.

“Didn’t I lave *you*, well latched in, to mind the house?” she asked in stern astonishment.

“There’s some latch-kays that opens what other latch-kays shets in,” answered Tom.

“What’s that you say?”

"Fhu!" (shivering) "it's a cowld bitther night to sleep widout blankets," was Tom's far-off answer, and he resumed his interrupted whistling.

"Didn't you hear me, Tom Naddy?—didn't I lave you in charge of the place?"

"Yes ma—ma'am; but mostha, I couldn't stop his hand, if 'twas his liking to sthrip the house from the kitchen to the tatch on the roof in it, what I b'lieve he'll do afore he laves off."

"It's the masther at his work agin, neighbors," cried Mrs. Molloy, starting up and seizing her cloak, "jist as I was telling you! He won't lave himself, poor fool iv a man, a blanket to cover his bed—no, nor a shirt to cover his ould skin! I'll tell ye something he done that-o-way, for the hundredth time, a little while ago—"

Tom Naddy deemed that she was staying too long from home, and interrupted her—"there's other blankets in the house as well as his own, and other things like shirts, too."

She started back, asking in her guttural tones, with utter surprise—"Is it *my* blankets, or any of *my* things you'd spake of?"

Tom broke up his whistling only with a sedate nod of assent.

Mrs. Molloy bounded, as well as she could, out of the cabin. She encountered Father Connell and Neddy Fennell in the middle of the yard, each heavily laden, and just about to escape with their spoil. She whisked the tails of her cloak over each arm, thus having her hands at liberty to stretch themselves out, while her voice croaked more than usual, and the beard on her two chins might be said to stir and bristle.

"Well to be sure! Isn't this a poor case! I'm downright ashamed o' you, sir! It's a burning scandal, sir—an' will you never give up these doings?—an' I'll not stand this, sir—an' I'll not put up with it, sir—an' I'll have you to know that I won't, sir!"

Father Connell, thus detected, after all his precautions, only smiled inwardly, however, as he said in a temporising voice, "Peggy, Peggy, anger is a deadly sin!"

"An' what kind of a sin do you call thievin', sir? Yes, thievin'—I can call it by no other name, sir."

"Let me pass out, good woman," said the priest sternly,

although he was now more disposed to laugh heartily; "and be patient, Peggy, be patient."

"Patient, in troth! patient! I can't be patient—and to ould Nick I pitch patience!—Look at that big hape undther your arum—my own things rowled up along wid yours!—patient! why, if a holy saint was sent o' purpose down to keep house for you, and to look afther herself and yourself, you'd torment the very life and sowl out iv her in a week, so you would; here I am, from Sunday morning to Saturday night, striving, an' scraping, an' piecing, an' patching, for the two ov us—an' all to no purpose—no, but worsen an' worsen for all I can do; an' now to make up the matther, you come ov sich an evening as this, and ov sich a night as this will be, to make me an' you get our death o' cowl in our beds."

"There is no fear of that, Peggy; we can still manage to rest comfortably, for one short night, in a good, warm house; but I must go with these things to the help of two poor, naked women, who might really perish before morning on the damp earth, and without covering of any kind; so you had better let us go on our way peaceably, Peggy."

Mrs. Molloy darted quickly at Neddy Fennell, making a grasp at his burden, as she vociferated—"go on your way!—the long and the short ov it is, since you put me to it, there is no blanket to lave this to-night—no, nor the thread ov a blanket."

Her master now became really severe and determined. He removed her arm from the boy's fardel, put her to one side, and saying, "Be silent, my good woman, be silent, and stand out of my way;—more than once since you came in here, you have uttered sin with your lips, and offended me—of that we will speak another time;—now, go out of my way, I say—I command you;—come, Neddy Fennell, come;" and without further opposition from Mrs. Molloy, who became perfectly stunned at this sudden and most unexpected annihilation of her authority—the priest and his follower cleared the premises.

A moment after their departure, Tom Naddy lounged to her side from the corner of an end wall of the stable, round which all along he had been listening and peeping; and while Mrs. Molloy still stood silent and utterly confounded,

remarked—"Ho! ho!—so, the priest is to do whatever he likes in the house for the future."

"Get out, you kiln-dried brat!" was the housekeeper's only reply, as she stamped, in much dignity, into her kitchen; while on his part Tom only sauntered after her, and resumed his place and his cat upon the hob.

Father Connell, closely followed by Neddy Fennell, bent his steps, by the least observable route, back again to the shower of houses. On his way thither, however, he stopped at more than one suburb shop to purchase, with the shillings he had almost thieved from his own curious escaratoire, additional articles of comfort for the Widow Fennell and her aged aunt.

He has been observed re-entering the abode of the potato-beggars. A moment after, the two poor, shivering, half-dead women in the inner dungeon, saw, with feelings and sensations which only those who for a long time have been very, very poor, and neglected, can at all understand, the unloading from the shoulders, and the arms, and the hands of the old man and the boy, the nice, clean, fresh straw, the gracious roll of blankets, a basketful of bread, a little crock of salt butter, a whole pound of halfpenny candles, and two or three black bottles, with old corks in them, containing huxter's ale and porter.

Standing quite erect, a disencumbered man, after getting rid of his burdens, Father Connell paused a moment, to wipe his brow with his handkerchief; then silently went to the miserable couches of the two forlorn sufferers; squeezed their hands in turn, and passed into the comparatively aristocratic abode of Nelly Carty and Bridget Mulrooney; and just after doing so, he thought he caught whisperings between Mrs. Fennell and her young son, as if in explanation of what had come about, and almost immediately following, sounds of suppressed crying, though not in an unhappy cadence.

No matter how our hero, Father Connell, arranged with the two good ladies of the mansion, they quickly went in to their lodgers, to all appearance most benevolently, and, of course, fussily active. The priest sat down before their impudent little fire, calling Neddy Fennell to him. The little lad slowly though immediately obeyed his old friend's summons, reclining on the floor, and gently leaning the

side of his head upon one of the priest's knees. He did not speak a word, but knowing that he was weeping plentifully in his silence, his patron just slid down his hand, fumbled for one of Neddy's, and squeezed it, and squeezed it.

The pair rose up, as the two potato-beggars approached the fire, each with one of their poor inmates, carried like weak, burthenless infants, in her arms; and, be it added, both the hitherto destitute women well wrapped up in blankets, with intimations here and there about their necks of inside personal comforters, previously the property of Mrs. Molloy.

Father Connell then went back to their bed-room—with Neddy's help bore out portions of the bread and butter and a bottle of the small porter: mulled some of the latter with his own hands, and leaving his protégées to enjoy so far, under the still bustling attentions of their landladies, unwonted luxuries, again took Neddy into the inner chamber, which he and his young assistant did not quit until they had heaped, breast high, their stolen straw into two palmy couches, and scientifically pressed each down, and covered each with a half of a yet unappropriated blanket, torn asunder by them according to their best skill. In fact, that blessed night, our old fairy friend, poor little Fanny Fennell, and her infirm old aunt, went to sleep, the first time for many months, in downy comfort, and with a happy sense of animal warmth and refreshment, and a still, still happier moral sense of yet having a single friend left to them in the wide, cold world. Before they quite closed their eyes, as they laughed and cried at one and the same time, how often did their prayers and their blessings ascend, not unheard, we do reverently hope, to the footstool of The Throne, for the earthly and eternal welfare of their simple-hearted, unostentatious, humble Samaritan!

It was still necessary, for the second time this evening, that Neddy Fennell should guide his priest through the mazes of the shower of houses. They arrived at the spot where they were finally to part for the night. The priest here stopped for an instant to bid Neddy good-night, and give him his blessing. As he was turning homewards, the boy spoke in low, broken accents:—

“Wait a minute, sir, if you please—I want to say a word

to you. It may be on your mind, sir, from the way that I helped you, and spoke to you, this evening, in the stable, with other things, that I'm a cold-hearted boy, with no thought or feeling in me, for my mother's and my aunt's distress, and for your kindness; but indeed I'm not, sir;—I'm not that, sir, indeed;—I—I—” And here the giddy-pated little fellow could get no further, but breaking out into sobbing and crying, turned his back on the priest, and ran home as fast as he could.

In a very short time afterwards, Father Connell, and Mrs. Molloy, and Tom Naddy, were as good friends as ever they had been in their lives. The housekeeper placed before him the little measure of ale, with a foaming head on it, which he emptied every night before going to bed, and which, with a crust to eke it out, was his beau-ideal of luxurious indulgence. A good fire, renewed by cinders, heated his outstretched limbs, and glittered in the large silver buckles of his shoes. To his left hand was his allowance of ale; to his right, pen and ink; and while he sipped his beverage, and munched his crust, we may transcribe—peeping over his shoulders, as well as the protuberance of the great wig above his ears will allow—the following entries, made by him in a curiously-covered book, which he called his journal, and, in which, for very many years, he had made some daily notes.

“I got up at three o'clock this morning to say my usual matins: it threatened to be a bitter day, and a bitter day it has been. I went to bed at four, and slept very well until seven; attended the chapel at eight: the snow was pelting in my face. God help the poor! Will the disbeliever persuade the poor man that there is no heaven?—he would then make the lot of the poor a hard one indeed. Those who sleep on beds of the softest down, and need but to wish for everything in order to have it, are they as good Christians as the Widow Fennell and her aunt have been? God bless the good friends whose bounty enabled me to put warm clothing on so many naked children and boys this day. Mick Dempsey would cover the shivering body of only a good boy—Mick does not remember that the blast is as bitter to the bad boy as to the good boy; and that the Lord does not send the sunshine to the good only. It is not wise to drive even the most wicked to despair; if

they have no hope of being better they will not try to be so ; and Mick Dempsey was not right when he gave me to understand that I was encouraging idleness. I humbly hope that I was doing something that may help to change it into industry. Neglected my middle of the day prayers. *Misere mei Domine!* Our prayers should never be overlooked, especially by a priest ; a priest is bound to give good example ; he cannot hope to do this without grace ; and grace is chiefly to be obtained by prayer. Reprehended Peggy Molloy for her tongue and bad language—not too severely, I think—and she seems the better of it ; she is faithful and honest ; a faithful and honest servant is a treasure ; but Peggy must be taught not to fall into a passion ; violent anger is like drunkenness—for the drunken and the angry man both forget their wisdom ; almost as many crimes spring from the one as the other. The first fair day I have I must beg all through the town, and then in the country, for the Widow Fennell, her poor aunt, and young Neddy. God help them all. I love that little boy in my very heart, and with God's help will be an earthly father to him."

And so ended our priest's entries in his journal for one day.

CHAPTER IX.

Active charity, like all other active things, when once put into motion, soon gains its goal. Father Connell had been saying and doing, and going backwards and forwards a good deal, to say nothing of contriving and suffering a good deal, since he first left his school-house for the shower of houses this evening ; and yet though all his contemplated work is now over, and he is luxuriantly preparing for bed at home, it is still early in the night. Neddy Fennell arrived at the door of his lodgings, after his final parting with his priest, while the nine o'clock bell—the curfew—or, as it was locally and elegantly termed, the "blackguards' bell" rang out a quick peal from the

curious wooden structure, very like an opera glass pulled out—surmounting the market-house of his native city.

His knock and request for re-admission were soon attended to, his small boy's voice outside being a sufficient warrant to his landladies of his identity. Passing into their house, a glance towards the fire showed him that the honest dames had contrived, during his short absence, to replace, as originally arranged, all the materials for their feast, which Father Connell's unexpected return caused them to push aside here and there and hide as well as they could, and the cook for the evening had the "tay" again nearly hot enough, while the bottle of "colliery crame" once more flanked it.

Without making further observations, however, the boy passed into the apartment occupied by his mother and her aunt, to observe how they were disposed of for the night. Under the influence of all the comforts they had just experienced, the poor women already began to doze. One of his mother's hands hung by the side of her couch. He went on his knees and gently stole it back again—but not before his lips had touched it—under the blankets; and then, bestowing a little thought on himself, Neddy took a goodly lump of bread from the basket on the floor; at the repeated invitations of Nelly Carty and Bridget Mulrooney, stole out on tiptoe, to their fire, accepted a proffered seat on one of the yellow clay hobs; and while industriously making way through his supper, he could not avoid becoming greatly interested in the resumed conversation of his hostesses.

"Well, Nelly," said Bridget, "here we are on the hunkers before our little fire again, and what is left of the tay and the cake a'most as good as ever; and it's mad intirely I am, yis indeed, to hear the rest that you have to tell about that Robin Costigan."

"Well, an' sure, lanna machree, Nelly Carty won't be long till she satisfies you. Well, Bridget, sure, as I gave you to untherstand afore the ould priest kem in, Robin and myself were great cronies, and faix, I'll never deny that I liked the boy well. Bud, Bridget, sure it happened one of a time, that my poor Robin borry'd the loan iv a horse, widout axin' lave, an' sure over again, he was cotch on the back of that horse at a fair in the Queen's County;

and they brought the poor boy to his thril afore the judge an' I thought my heart would break, they found him guilty, an' sintined him to die. An' sure enough, the ugly lookin' gallows was put up for Robin on the Green abroad, and sure enough he was walked to the gallows, and it was the same Father Connell that quitted us a little while agone, that stepped out by his side to the gallow's fut. Well, asthore. The day that was in it was a winter's day. I'll never forget it, one o' the dark, black days afore Christmas; and the evenin' began to fall a'most before he turned off; an' when the time came to cut the rope, cut it was; and sure meeself was the very girl that caught him in my arms."

"Yourself, Nelly?" half shrieked Bridget. As for Neddy Fennell, his jaws stopped grinding his loaf, while he stared in startled surprise at the narrator.

"Meeself, Bridget. Well, *alanna machree*, sure I thought I felt a stir in my poor Robin," Neddy Fennell had taken another bite at his loaf, but again stopped short in his preparations to masticate it.

"An' you couldn't count twenty, afore I had him in a good warm bed, and Darby Croak the bleether there by his side; an' surely, surely, the stir in poor Robin got more life in it from time to time; an' surely, surely, over agin, many hours didn't go by till we had my poor fellow alive, an' as well as ever—ay, an' laughin' heartily too at the brave escape he had—tho' that, afther all, might be a little bit iv a secret betuxt himself an' the *skibbeeuk**—an' faix we spent as pleasant a night as kem from that to this—in wakin' the poor corpse, as we called it."

"Are you tellin' the truth, Nelly Carty?" gasped Neddy Fennell quite aghast.

"Wait, Neddy, my pet—sure there's a little more to come. It was about an hour afore daybreak, when my poor Robin strolled out, just to see how his legs would go on along some iv the roads convainent afther the dance upon nothin' they had the day afore. In the coorse iv the night, sure he swore a big oath to us, that he'd never borry a horse agin, because they war unlooky cattle; but he made no oath agin cows, and it's as thrue as that I'm sittin' here tellin' it, afore the mornin' quite broke, Robin borried a

* Hangman.

nice fat cow out of a field by the roadside. Well, *alanna machree*, the cow didn't turn out a lookier baste for Robin nor the horse."

"What's that you're goin' to say, now," again interrupted Neddy Fennell; "was he hanged over again, Nelly?"

"Faix, an' if he wasn't, Neddy, my honey, he had very little to spare that he wasn't; for the man that thought he had a betther right to the cow than Robin, soon missed her, an' ran thro' the town clappin' his hands, an' got all the help he could; an' sure they all kem up with the poor boy, on the road to the fair ov Bennet's-bridge, an' he in the cow's company; an' so they laid houl't on him, an' made him turn back, without the cow, and they rammed him into their gaol agin."

"Well," whispered Neddy.

"Well, *a-cuishla-gal-machree*, there he was, shure enough—only not for a long time, for well became Robin, he found manes ov breakin' out ov their gaol, an' from that blessed hour to this no livin' crature but myself ever set eyes on him in the town. But now, listen well to me, Bridget, and you, Neddy Fennell; ather five-an'-thirty years is past an' gone, an' I an ould woman, I seen Robin Costigan, this day, as sure as I now see ye both forenent me."

Many were the ejaculations of surprise, and, indeed, almost of terror, uttered by the listeners. "And to-day, Nelly?—when? where? how?" they asked together.

"Whist! spake lower, none ov us spoke very loud yet, but now we are to spake lower than ever—and for a good rason. I said that Father Connell had a sharp eye, and that he ought to remember Robin Costigan, for wasn't it he that made his sowl for him at the gallow's fut? But the ould priest couldn't know him now, Bridget, for Robin is changed by years, and he is changed by contrivances, but *I* knew him well, Bridget, from the minute I saw him. I can't say that he had the same knowledge of me when he looked me in the face—but *I* used to be too fond iv *him* long ago, ever, ever to forget him. And I tell you I saw him this very day, and I tell you more than that, I saw him in the very next house—in Joan Flaherty's house."

Bridget Mulrooney thumped her breast, crossed herself, and turned up her eyes. Neddy Fennell jumped off the hob, breathing hard, and frowning abhorringly, and it

would seem indignantly, at the remote end wall of the hovel, which divided him from Joan Flaherty's house. This wall, however, did not rise higher than the point at which the wattles of the roof commenced, so that an inmate of either abode could, by standing on a chair, or even upon a stool, peep into the other.

After a few moments, Nelly Carty resumed slowly, and in whispers, and Neddy again seating himself on the hob, changed his wide opened, glowing eyes from the end wall to her face.

"An' he is a beggarman, now, iv you please ; and he has a poor, withered limb, *morya*,* an' I seen three childher wid him that he takes into the street, when he goes a-begging."

"Tell me this, Nelly," asked Neddy Fennell suddenly, and as if wishing for an answer in the affirmative, "if the judge heard he was alive, wouldn't he have him hung over again?"

"Faix, an' I'm thinking he would, my lanna ; sure they owe him the last hanging, at any rate ; an' I'd go bail if they had a houl't iv him now, they'd—but be asy wid your tricks, ye young limb."

A handful of small pebbles, as it seemed, clattering and jingling among Nelly's "tay-things," caused her thus suddenly to interrupt herself.

"It wasn't I that did it, Nelly, though I often played you a trick before now," answered Neddy Fennell very slowly, and in the least possible whisper—"it wasn't I that did it ; but just turn your head behind you, and look towards the far end of the room."

"Don't, Bridget! Don't for the world wide," admonished Nelly—"it's himself is in it—I know it is ; for there is no male crature living on Joan Flaherty's flure along wid him."

So neither of the good ladies obeyed Neddy Fennell's command. The boy, however, saw indistinctly, in the almost complete darkness, at the remote point he peered at, the head and shoulders of a man elevated over the imperfect division wall.

"Is the ould priest gone?" asked this apparition, in stealthy and husky tones.

* By the way.

Nelly winked at Bridget to answer, and Bridget accordingly said—"He is gone these three hours, neighbor."

"Will he come agin to-night, ye ould *collochs*?"* continued the same voice.

"No, surely, neighbor; he is gone for this night, sartin."

"*Bannath lath*,† then," and the head and shoulders disappeared. A dead silence succeeded. Nelly Carty held up her hand, and significantly looked her meaning at Bridget Mulrooney, who, in return, nodded her head.

"Neddy Fennell," added Nelly, "for the worth ov the life that's in you, and that's in all our bodies,"—she whispered these words into his very ear—"don't let out o' you a breath of what you have heard here this night;—mind my words."

They all went to bed, Neddy lying down on some straw, confronting that side of the house occupied by Monsieur the pig; while his gentle hostesses, unfolding certain rolled-up parcels in the corners to the right and left of the fire-place, but which, after all, contained only straw pallets, with very wretched covering, made their own couches thereof.



CHAPTER X.

So full of the idea of Robin Costigan—the man that had been nearly twice hung, thirty-five years ago, and yet at present was alive—so full of this unique personage was Neddy Fennell's head, that for hours he could not sleep. He felt, above all things, great curiosity, to see distinctly the features of the fellow, towards whom he could not avoid indulging prepossessions of awe and terror, along with those of strong dislike and distrust. Neddy's terror was not, however, of the cowardly kind.

At last he did sleep, but his slumbers were disturbed, with dream after dream of the fearful robber, and each of the most distressingly nervous kind; until at last he

* Hag.

† Good-night.

started awake again, trembling and shuddering, and bathed in perspiration.

The darkness around him was so deep, that "a horror of it," as is sublimely said in the holy writings, "fell upon him." The wintry winds abroad whistled and piped around the half-rotten hovel which enclosed him, and sometimes, swelling into a great rage, pushed and jostled, as it were, against its mud walls until they shook again. Presently, a weak cry of human sorrow, mingled, he thought, with the alternate wailing, and howling, and roaring of the blast. He quickly sat up on his straw couch, and listened intently. The cries were repeated, he became quite sure; and more, they came over the boundary wall between him and Robin Costigan's lodging.

He continued to listen. In one of the half pauses of the tempest, the poor, weak cry changed into a smothered shriek, immediately after the sound, as if of a heavy blow, had reached Neddy's ears.

"Helo there!" he suddenly screamed out, his shrill, young voice piercing above the various noises of the wind.

All sounds ceased in the neighboring hut. He listened attentively, still neither the poor weak cry, nor the blow, nor the shriek, was repeated. He dropped asleep again; and, as the first peep of day struggled, doubtless unwillingly, through the atmosphere of the shower of houses, Neddy was up and out, washing his face in the snow, drifted before the house-door, half in great glee, half in a luxurious feeling of refreshment; and when his toilet had been completed, the light-hearted boy industriously fell to work making snow-balls, piling them pyramidically at his side, and peering around him in every direction for the approach of some foe, against whom he might discharge them.

In the twilight of the bleak and bitter winter morning, not many objects of enmity appeared, however, stirring abroad; but the few who did appear within range of his battery, soon felt a snow-shot breaking about their ears; for Master Neddy Fennell had often shared in a "pelting-match" of no very playful character, between the mutually abhorring boys of two rival schools; so that from practice, his aim, particularly when directed against a human cranium, became almost unerring.

He was pausing for a new enemy; none appeared; but the patched and tattered door of Joan Flaherty's abode uttered a squeak, and then it slowly opened a little, and a man's head, thickly covered with matted grey hair, protruded itself through the opening, and now turned one way, and now another, as if, by the agency of its proper eyes, taking an observation of the weather.

"The old robber's head!" thought Neddy, frowning and setting his teeth, and looking hard to make out Robin Costigan's features. But he could distinguish none, the head being poked forward, so that only its large crown became satisfactorily visible; Neddy had in his right hand as nice a snow-ball as even he had ever manufactured. With both hands he now gave it two or three additional squeezes, until it grew almost as hard as a stone; the next instant bang it went, like a bursting bomb-shell, against the crown of the mysterious and detested head, causing, it may be presumed, an explosion like thunder in the ears and in the interior of its object, at all events making that object disappear, as if it and its owner had been sent staggering backwards into Mrs. Flaherty's, or Miss Flaherty's tenement; for the question of title was, in the present case, rather a debated one.

Many seconds did not elapse before Neddy had the door of his own temporary residence secured on the inside; and, while his landladies and their pig still slept on and snorted together, was peeping into his neighbor's apartment, over the division wall, just as Robert Costigan, though from its other side, had peeped over it, the night before, into the secrecy of the residence of Mesdames Carty and Mulrooney.

Here he at first saw nothing but smoke. Waiting some time, and peering more sharply, he at length imperfectly discerned Joan Flaherty—a half-blind, and a wholly deaf and stupid old crone—sitting on her heels at a hearth, upon which, using her own mouth as a bellows, she puffed and puffed with a view of kindling some atrocious materials for a fire; while almost for every puff she coughed and coughed, as if earnestly trying to force up her worn-out lungs. But though the young eaves-dropper could as yet see no living thing but Joan, he could hear the sounds of other human voices than hers. He could hear threats and

imprecations uttered in a morose, masculine voice, and plaintive expostulations, or lamentations, in the tones, he believed, which had reached him the previous night; and the subdued cry of an infant, too, and the sturdier wail of another young voice—all mixed up with the coughing, and the wheezing, and the bellows-blowing of old Joan. The venomous smoke made Neddy's eyes smart and run water; still he perseveringly clung, insecurely supported, to the top of the mud wall. In about half an hour, the exhausted beldame had succeeded in kindling her fire, and having previously thrown open the door of her house to let out the pestilent fog it had engendered, Neddy could make further observations. Standing near to her, and towards the farther side of the fire, he saw a man of rather low stature, yet of herculean build, combing with his fingers, over his forehead and face, and even upon his shoulders, his long, dishevelled, grey hair; and from the care with which the operation was performed, it seemed evident that he considered it one of great importance. He was enveloped in a loose, blue frieze coat, reaching in tatters below his knees; the half of his legs, that could be seen from under it, were bare; and old brogues, too large for him, and partially stuffed with straw—as was indicated by blades of that article starting up over their inner sides—adorned his immense ill-shaped feet. Again Neddy Fennell tried to make out the features of Robin Costigan, but the redoubtable robber stood with his side turned to Neddy; and this circumstance, aided by the thick veil of grey hair, and the high-standing collar of Robin's wrap-rascal, once more baffled his scrutiny.

Other objects drew Neddy's deep attention. While engaged in his toilet, as has been described, Robin Costigan severely studied the proceedings of three children, who had not yet quite arisen from the straw, in which during the night they had burrowed. One was a girl of about nine years, wearing only the scantiest and most shreddy drapery, secured by any possible contrivance, around her elegantly formed little person. The second was a boy, an incipient giant—say of five years. His upper dress consisted of an old waistcoat, his bare arms thrust through its arm-holes; while a threadbare piece of sacking, tied round his waist, descended almost to his feet. And the third

child was no more than an infant, rolled up in a most curious bundle of rags; its sex is not yet known; but the strong presumption is, that it was a little female human creature.

The girl was busily employed scrubbing at the infant's face, with a coarse damp cloth. The boy was sitting in his straw, his chin resting on his little fists, and they in turn resting on his crippled-up knees—it was perfectly evident, that he contemplated, in mortal terror and deep dislike, the process he beheld going on, inasmuch as he expected to be himself very soon subjected to a similar one.

The infant gave a restive squall, and had it been any other infant, would certainly have fought, with full lungs, kicks, and wreathings, against the uncongenial friction inflicted upon its face in such very, very, cold weather. But a bellow from the man of the tattered "riding-coat," at once terrified the little animal into seeming acquiescence; it became silent and still, tears only running down its miserable face, as it fixed its frightened eyes on the beller.

"Devil's in your wizend, ye *sheecog*,"* apostrophized the superintendent of the scrubbing, "there's no squall from you when it's wantin'; but I'll learn you to bawl out in the right time, and to hould your whisht in the right time—burroo!"—another bellow—"hould it up to me here," addressing the scrubber, who with visible trepidation obeyed. The man critically inspected the face, neck, hands, and arms of the unfortunate baby, twisting it and its little limbs here and there, with about as much compassion as if he were scrutinizing the points of a turkey offered to him for sale. He continued, speaking to the little girl—

"Well for you, you jade, that there's not a speck, the size of a pin's head, or I'd make you rue the day; fall to the legs and feet now, an' make 'em as clean as a whistle;" and he went on combing his hair with his fingers.

"Hould it up agin," he commanded, after a short pause. "Do you call them washed, you faggot?" and he accompanied his words with a blow from his open hand that sent the girl and the infant rolling in the straw. She could not keep in a scream. "Not a tune from you now, or I'll give

* Fairy-struck child—a fairy.

you last night over agin ;" he snatched up a cudgel near at hand.

"I won't cry, nor I won't say one word—I won't, I won't, sir dear," said the little scrubber, clasping her charge with one of her bare arms, rising to her knees, and joining both her hands.

"It will keep for another time, then," and the cudgel was put aside ; "but go on with your work, I tell you, and don't bring my hand on you."

Her eyes gushing, but every whisper kept in, she proceeded still further to torture the infant, by rubbing with the coarse, wet cloth at its legs and feet, as if she were bound to rub them quite away. Her overseer inspected her work again, and grumbled something like a half approval. He then examined the cap which was to cover the little being's head for the day, and which the girl ought to have perfectly washed over night. It was found not to be at all satisfactory, and a second swinging blow from his open hand followed.

The tire-woman, before she could recover herself, was next ordered to attack with her cloth the shivering and detesting young rascal, who, it has been said, awaited his turn in no amiable feelings. Very well did he know that he must not utter a sound of disapproval in the presence of the grey-headed supervisor; but to make amends for his silence he bit, whenever he thought that he was unobserved by his tyrant, the hands and arms of his attendant, until he almost fetched blood from them ; while she, poor young creature, durst not utter a sound of complaint.

Her own person was next to be looked after ; her pretty little face, her neck, arms, and hands, and her lower limbs and extremities to be carefully washed ; and her abundant golden hair to be combed and adjusted in its natural curls adown her cheeks and shoulders with the best possible effect. And until this new task was completed to the full approval of her master, she was scrutinized and found fault with, as in the case of the infant and boy, and heavy punishment was still inflicted.

She now produced a small bag containing about one dozen of potatoes, and these she was commanded to wash, and place on the fire to boil ; after which the man gave peremptory orders that the "breakfast" should be finished,

and the three children ready to set out with him into the streets "in the turn of a hand;" and then he left the hovel. A short time afterwards he might be found in a mean public house, sitting to a good fire, with his own breakfast placed before him, consisting of a loaf of bread, a cut of butter, a dish of "rashers and eggs," and a quart of mulled porter, with a "stick in it"—that is to say, about two glasses of whiskey. As he opened the door to go out, Neddy Fennell abandoned his post of observation, with the view of at last fully confronting him abroad, and reading attentively the mysterious features of the half-hanged scoundrel; but a call from his mother's couch was not to be neglected.

He found the poor woman and her aunt much refreshed after a good night's sleep. Milk had been sent that morning by Father Connell for their and his use; this he heated, and Neddy's patients soon ate a hearty breakfast. He then prepared some for himself and put it into a noggin lent to him by his landladies; also furnished himself with his share of bread—and be it noticed, not mere than his share—took a few bites and sips, and passed, with the bread in one hand and the noggin in the other, into the neighboring wigwam.

The small pot containing the dozen potatoes was now boiled in this plentiful house and taken off the fire; and to one side of it sat the cook who had prepared them, the baby on her knees; to the other, the gruff little boy who had so well bitten her knelt to his occupation, as if he felt more devotion towards it than could be expressed by a sitting posture; for the trio were engaged, each more or less, in consuming the contents of the pot.

To make amends for the late coercion imposed on its natural propensity to cry out as shrilly as it could, the nondescript infant now screamed at the pitch of three Scotch bagpipes; while its nurse endeavored literally to stop its mouth with the largest potatoes she could find, herself being only able from time to time to swallow a scanty mouthful. Not so the wicked-faced young cannibal opposite to her. Resolved, he seemed, as in truth resolved he was, to take ample advantage of her inability to satisfy her appetite. He peeled off the skins of the potatoes, and then dropped them, as it were, into his stomach with as-

tounding despatch; yet it was not an expression of relish of his fare that appeared in his face; it was the jealous fierceness of craving hunger; and his scowl at the girl was actually ferocious whenever she abstracted a potato from the limited store, which he could have well appropriated entirely to himself.

Neddy Fennell stood over this group without being noticed by any one of it. Laying his bread across his noggin and the hand that had lately held it upon the glossy golden hair of the little maid-of-all-work—

"My poor little girl," he said, "will you take a little bit of bread, and a little hot milk from me?"

She started and raised her eyes; now that it could be viewed clearly her face looked prettier than before; but she only stared at Neddy without uttering a word.

"Try it, poor little girl," he went on, seating himself on the floor by her side, "taste it—do now; 'tis very nice, and 'tis my own." He did not know how to account for her look of speechless astonishment; but it was the very first time during that little creature's whole life, that a human voice had so sounded in her ears, or a human hand had been so stretched forth to offer her unbegged food. He broke a morsel of bread and put it into her hand; she mechanically conveyed it to her lips, and then ate it ravenously. Neddy held up his noggin to her, and inclining it sideways for her accommodation, she drank a little of the hot milk. Tears then ran from her eyes, while in the cant of the profession in which she had been tutored, she whined out:—

"May God reward the hand of help, and the tender heart of charity."

"Give me some of that," growled the little savage at the other side of the pot.

"You?" answered Neddy—"I won't give you a mouthful."

"By the big divil, I'll tell the ould fellow, if ye don't," retorted the apt scholar of a worthy teacher.

"Here, then, here," said the governess, quickly handing over to him almost the whole of the pieces of bread her young visitor had given her, in the teeth of Neddy's remonstrances to prevent her doing so. They disappeared as quickly as does a fish into water.

"And the good milk!" he continued hoarsely, for some of the unaccustomed food had stuck in his throat.

She ran over to him, the infant chucked up on one arm, with the noggin, which Neddy had now left, according to her entreaties, at her disposal.

The bundled-up infant, seeing that all was holiday around it, held out its arms, opened its mouth to an unusual span, and also tyrannically insisted on its share. Its poor little attendant could not, or at least did not reject its appeal, so that in a few moments, neither Neddy nor his new acquaintance had another mouthful of the bread and milk to divide between themselves.

But in a very short time, notwithstanding this privation, they were making each other's acquaintance rapidly. At Neddy's repeated solicitations, the little girl went into a history of all her sorrows, speaking in whispers, lest the prematurely desperate character, who had so often fastened his tusks in her flesh, might overhear the discourse. Neddy listened, sometimes in pity, sometimes in wrath; and with his whole heart and soul his eyes were fastened unwinkingly upon her face, and one of his hands were again laid unconsciously on her shining, golden hair; suddenly he felt her start and shudder, while her looks fixed upon some object, in a very agony of terror. The next instant, Neddy Fennell and Robin Costigan were staring directly at each other.

The beggarman's lip and chin had not been shaved for some time, so that the growth of his beard disguised the form of his mouth. His nose, too, was but half distinguishable through the streaks of grey hair, which he had combed with his fingers nearly over its whole length, and so far, all appeared sufficiently lachrymose and pity-stirring in his physiognomy. But even through that shade of that hair, two eyes darted their rays upon Neddy Fennell, under the bad and deep expression of which the intrepid boy quailed for a moment, but it was only for a moment; and then his steady though inquisitive glance, fully met the baleful glare of the other.

"Who are you, my chap?" demanded the beggarman.

"I'm myself, and who are you?" smartly asked Neddy in his turn.

"You live in the next house?"

"To be sure I do—well?"

The man did not immediately continue speaking. He took up the infant, and folded it very deliberately into the bosom of his loose blue riding-coat.

"Are ye coming?" he roared to the girl, and the wicked little boy. They took their places at his either side. He seized the younker with one hand; crippled up the fingers of the other towards his mouth, and then issued with his "helpless orphans," from the miserable hut.

Outside its threshold he found Neddy Fennell, still closely studying himself and his actions; and—

"Take care of yourself, my bouchal, and keep out of my way," he growled.

"Let *you* take care of *yourself*, and keep out of *my* way," retorted Master Neddy.

And, at a little distance, the boy followed him and his poor companions through the puzzle of the shower of houses, and then, through a scarcely less dirty suburb, into the town, pondering much as he trudged through the snow and the biting blast. He had at length scrutinized, as far as was possible, the features of the object of his great wonder and detestation. And they did not much disappoint his notions beforehand, of what those of the hero of Nelly Carty's tale ought to have worn. They were such features, too, as well became the brutal fellow, whom he had seen tormenting and beating the children a few hours ago. But why he should have so tormented and beaten them, merely to have their hands and faces, and little limbs, scrubbed perfectly to his satisfaction, seemed a difficult question to solve. The beggarman began, in the first considerable street of the town, an oratorical appeal to the public, in which those very little creatures were noticed in the most affectionate and touching terms; and Neddy's difficulties increased: he could see no identity between the robber, who had been nearly twice walked to the gallows' foot, and who, so very lately, had given proofs of the unaltered scoundrelism of his nature, and the poor mendicant now before him, whom every one pitied and relieved, on account of his love and care of his little orphans. But ere the appeal had been quite gone through he began to understand the matter. The wretched man, who could not afford for himself or for them, anything like covering suf-

ficient in the present perishing weather, still, it was evident to any observer, tried to perform, towards the innocents, some of the duties of a parent, and upon this conviction public sympathy could not fail to be aroused.

"Avoch, see," cried the women as he passed along, "he's hardly able to keep a stitch on himself or them; and yet, see how clane and dacent he has 'em, the cratures."

His appeal must be transcribed. It was made up of short sentences, and published in a loud sonorous voice, which rose and fell, in oratorical cadence, with, it may be said, each separate verse. As he went on with it, his head turned from side to side; his crippled hand and arm (the same which had clutched and wielded the cudgel the night before) imperfectly gesticulated, in a very awful manner; and all his features, even his eyes, so far as they could be read, through the veil of hair, expressed deep woe, and the veins of his neck swelled with the strength of his feelings. Here then follow the exact words of his petition, neither added to nor diminished:—

"I was left with a motherless charge.

"God help the motherless!

"I was left with a child six days ould.

"I am a desolate man, the Lord pity me!

"It isn't by the words of the mouth, I tell ye—look into my breast, an' look at aich side o' me!

"I was left, for a space ov nine weeks, sick, an' sore, an' lone, in a small wilderness ov a cottage.

"The mother o' the childther was taken away a corpse from my side.

"God in Heaven be merciful to the poor crature!

"I had no friend in the wide world, to succor myself or the childther.

"The Lord look down on the desolate!

"An' I come to spake out my hard case, to the feelin' hearts of the Christian people.

"Good Christians, pity me!

"Pity the motherless charge! Pity the forlorn father! Ah, do, worthy tinther-hearted servants o' God!"

Not many hours after hearing this piece of pathetic eloquence, Neddy Fennell was again prying into the secrets of Joan Flaherty's house. As nearly as possible the scene of the morning became repeated under his eyes.

Some questions arose concerning a morsel of bread which the little girl had received, during the day, as an alms. Indeed, while famishing with hunger during their miserable perambulations, she had stealthily eaten it, and so at present it was not to be found in her little wallet. The protector of the motherless charge seized, with his crippled hand, now again made quite straight, his dreaded cudgel, and began to belabor the poor child most heartily. But while so employed, a good lump of hardened clay, suddenly smiting him on the side of the head, sent Robin Costigan staggering about the hovel; and ere he could recover from his astonishment and confusion, another missile of the same material, but of greater size and weight, followed its predecessor, and actually brought him down. With one dash of his hands, the beggarman drew back to either side of his forehead and face, their curtain of matted grey locks, the better to enable him to discern his assailant; and while in the act of doing so, and while he yet lay prostrate, Neddy Fennell at length beheld, distorted by rage and ferocity, a face which, to his dying day, he never forgot.

Their regards met. Neddy was now astride on the wall, kicking it with his heels as it were a restive horse, which he spurred against a detested enemy; and his right arm was raised high, ready to discharge a third shot, and his very handsome boyish face glowed, and his brows frowned deeply over his flashing eyes, as he shouted out, "Yes, Costigan, I'm the very boy that did it! and if you beat that little girl again, I'll pelt the brains out of your robber's skull!—take this over again for a warning."

The third bullet flew from his hands, but this time missed its billet. The next instant the beggarman was on his feet; and before Neddy could re-arm himself, a swinging blow from the cudgel staggered him in his seat on the top of the old clay wall, which had supplied him with ammunition; while a tug at one of his legs, made almost simultaneously with the blow, fairly dropped him under her own roof, into Nelly Carty's arms, who had just returned from her day's quest.

"You misfortunate bit iv a boy," whispered Nelly, in great wrath and alarm, "d'ye want to get yourself an' all iv us murdered?"

She glanced towards the door, which she had left open. The beggarman came into them through it, as Neddy roared out louder than ever:—"I'll make the gallows'-bird stop beating that little girl!"

The cudgel whizzed over his head, just missing it. Had it taken effect, with half the strength exercised by the herculean arm that wielded it, the boy must have fallen dead on the spot. Nelly Carty, pulling the hood of her cloak quite over her face, so as to hide her terror-stricken features as well as she could, threw her arms round Neddy, standing between him and her old crony; Bridget Mulrooney sprang to her assistance; both women began to remonstrate and scold in their shrillest tones; their poor lodgers in the inner den, though not well knowing what was going forward, screamed violently; while the penny-whistle squeak of old Joan Flaherty's lungs chimed in from some corner of her own dwelling.

Still the intruder seemed bent on taking a fell revenge. He was tearing away the two potato-beggars from the boy, and his right hand and arm were gathering and knitting all their deadly strength for a better aimed blow of the cudgel, when another hand, and not a weak, although an old one, collared him from behind, and Father Connell's voice, almost for the first time breaking through its usual mild or grave cadence, demanded, while it over-mastered all the hideous noises around him, the causes of the affray.

The expression of Costigan's face instantly and completely changed. His set teeth widely separated—he gasped—his jaw dropped; the murderer's cloud left his brow; and then he turned his head over his shoulder, to observe the features of the new-comer; and after one look at them, twisted, not without an effort, out of the old priest's gripe, the standing collar of his riding-coat, and hastily retreated through the yet open doorway.

It was a long time before Father Connell could obtain any clear information regarding the nature of the scene he had just witnessed. Nelly Carty did not, by any means, wish to be candid. From Neddy Fennell he gained, however, some useful evidence. He learned that the person that he had just seen was the same he had once endeavored to prepare for a felon's death;—and again questioning Nelly Carty, still closely, and more authoritatively, she,

with great wringing of her hands, was compelled to admit the fact. Neddy also fully explained the cause of the personal quarrel between himself and the formidable robber; and although his priest sternly reprehended him, it was not difficult to perceive, that he almost excused the boy's act of aggression, for the motive that had prompted it. He passed into the next cabin, Neddy Fennell attending at his heels. The beggarman was not to be seen; but he saw the three wretched children, and he pitied them. He questioned the girl. He asked where she came from?—where she was born? She could not tell.—Who were her parents? She did not know; but Darby Cooney—the name by which she had always known her tyrant—had often told her, while beating her, that she was no child of his; though, indeed, she had no remembrance of ever living with any one else but him. And the wicked boy had been given into her charge, about three years ago, and the infant a few months ago; but where they came from, she could not tell, no more than if they had dropped down from the sky.

It was with great difficulty that Father Connell obtained even this scanty information; and when she had concluded, the poor child, her cheeks streaming tears, earnestly stipulated that Darby Cooney might not be told, “she had informed on him.”

“Och!” she added, her fears increasing into passion, “he would kill me stone dead wi’ the stick; och yea, he wouldn’t lave a bit o’ life in me.”

Father Connell asked her some questions on religious points; she had scarcely an idea on the subject. The good man then contemplated her and the other children, in silent commiseration and thoughtfulness. His little favorite crept to his side, venturing in whispers to plead for his young protégée, and to hope that he was now forgiven for having pelted the old robber from the top of the wall. Our parish priest seized his hand, and although he did not still speak a word, but only squeezed it again and again, Neddy was satisfied with the answer.

“I will be here early to-morrow morning, Neddy, please God, to meet this Darby Cooney, and to see what we can do for the poor children. Now I must go to your mother’s bedside.”

After sitting a little while with Mrs. Fennell, her visitor informed her that better lodgings had been provided for her and her aunt, into which he would have them removed next morning. He then took his way homeward.

As usual, his little squire saw him safe through the mysteries of the potato-beggars' town. Returning to his lodgings, Neddy perceived the door of Joan Flaherty's abode still open, and ventured in. The girl stood up to meet him.

"May a blessing be upon your road, good honest boy," she said, "for the pity you have to me; no crature ever had pity for me afore."

"What is your name, poor little girl?"

"Mary Cooney."

"And you're not the daughter of that rogue and rascal?"

"Sure he says himself that I'm not, an' sure if I was, he wouldn't be so hard on me entirely."

"And why don't you run away from him, and never go next or near him again?"

"Och! och! where in the world could I go to?"

"I'll give you half of my breakfast, and half of my dinner; and when I'm a big man, and have money, as my father used to have, I'll give you half of that, too."

This very plausible and very practicable plan, seemed to open, for a moment, to the mind's vision of the poor listener, a new and dazzling vista of hope and happiness. Her beautiful eyes glowed with momentary delight, and looked intently forward, as if she, even materially, enjoyed the fairy prospect. But suddenly all changed in that young face, and she moaned out:—

"Och, my good and my tender-hearted boy; but I couldn't hide anywhere from Darby Cooney—och, he knows where everybody is; and he'd find me out if the earth covered me; and if I thry'd to hide from him, it's then he'd murder me!"

"I wouldn't let him murder you, and Father Connell wouldn't let him murder you."

"An' och," she went on, suddenly clasping her hands and starting aside from her young champion—"if he kem back upon me now, an' found the childher not washed and put to bed, and the babby's cap not washed, an' myself not

washed—och, och, it would be a sore night to me!—an' you here, would be the worst ov all! Good-bye to you, tendher-hearted boy." She sprang back to him, threw her arms round his neck, and kissed him. "Don't stay here any longer—don't, don't come with me over the threshold—an' may the blessing o' the motherless an' the fatherless be in your road!" she ran into the hovel and shut the door. Neddy Fennell turned into his own resting-place, full of plans for the emancipation and future happiness of his new acquaintance.

The next morning Father Connell came, according to his promise, to converse with Darby Cooney. But neither Darby Cooney, nor any of his motherless charge were anywhere to be found; nor could the most minute inquiries supply the slightest information regarding the hour at which they had abandoned their lodgings, or the route they had afterwards pursued.



CHAPTER XL.

To one side of the principal street of Father Connell's little city, and nearly at its termination, was a low, long house, having quite the appearance of a private residence—except that its entrance door was always open, and yet it was an apothecary's establishment. It had no shop front—no huge bottles of tinted water, fit for not a single earthly purpose, ornamented its unbusiness-like window; nor in the apartment assigned to its owner's professional occupations, were there many of the usual indications of an apothecary's shop, nor indeed of a shop of any kind. And people said, that Dick Wresham, although depending exclusively on pestle and mortar for his support, was too much of a gentleman, to carry on his trade in anything like the common way.

In his—what shall it be called?—hall of audience perhaps, there were five or six old mahogany parlor chairs, with very broad, flat, black-leather bottoms, secured at the front and sides with large, round-headed brass nails; and

the stone window-sills, on the outside of his long house, were worn into a peculiar smoothness and polish. And why are these two facts mentioned? It will appear why.

The proprietor of the medical mart was a thin-bodied, sharp-featured, active-minded, little man, with a malicious twinkle in his ferret eye, and a mischievous grin round his mouth. He wore black, except that his stockings were of grey worsted; a long slender queue, perked out between his shoulders; his hair was well pomatumed and powdered; and abundance of powder also lay on the collar of his coat. And he must now put himself into action for us.

It is still a bitter December morning, not a great many removed from that with which we have last had to do. Dicky Wresham runs to his open door, peeps up and down the street; runs in again to his drugs, and out again in a few minutes, to take another peep. He evidently expects the arrival of some person or persons, and he is very anxious and fidgetty on the point. And one by one the wished-for visitors arrive, and one by one, he greets them heartily.

Are they customers? No: they are individuals who, every day in the year, come to polish the bottoms of the old black-leather chairs, within doors, if it be inclement weather; or else the window-stools in the street, if it be fair weather; and they come each to empty his budget of small gossip, or to have a similar one emptied into him; or to join, open-mouthed, in scandal, not always of a harmless nature, or to make remarks on all passers-by in the streets; or, in a word, idly to spend their idle time, in the best way they can possibly devise. So Dick Wresham has them almost all about him for the day, at which he rubs his hands and looks fully happy—and he is so; for, doubtless, a stock of capital gossip, and scurrility, and fun, is now laid in for him; and Dick's craving appetite for such mental food should be satisfied every morning as soon as ever he had powdered his head and coat collar.

And this assemblage, in Dick's laboratory, was familiarly known, through the town, as "Dick Wresham's school." They also styled themselves "gentlemen;" and Dick and many others admitted the title, though a good many people besides questioned whether the standard used by the little apothecary and his immediate friends, for measuring a

"gentleman" agreed, in all respects, with that adopted for the same purpose by "Ulster King-at-Arms." But however this may be, the school has now assembled. All the scholars are, upon this particular morning, within doors, of course, the weather not permitting a meeting in the open air. Two of their number post themselves as sentinels of observation, face to face, against the jambs of the doorway, and their business is to look out for objects and subjects of commentary, among the simple people who pass by; or haply (for the videttes are great wags) to beckon some one of the simplest among the simple into Dick Wresham's school-room, and there exercise some practical joke—that smallest and most country-townish way of pretending to wit.

A few of Dick Wresham's school may just be pencilled in.

Gaby M'Neary was one of them. He had begun life with, as he himself would beautifully express it, "a blue look-out;" that is with little to recommend him, except a handsome person, and a good flow of red Protestant blood in his veins. These two qualities, however slender they might prove in other countries, gained him a rich enough wife in Ireland; legacies from her relatives afterwards dropped in, so that he was now, at an advanced age, able to live "genteelly," that is, without doing any one earthly thing, except to eat, drink, and sleep, and have his own way, right or wrong; and Dicky Wresham accordingly wrote him down "gentleman."

Gaby was tall and bulky, but stooped in his shoulders. He could not be said to have an ill-tempered face; but it had a domineering look, befitting a person of much importance in the world, both as to rank and religious creed; and this was one of the characteristics of what the papists of the time used to term a "Protestant face."

Jack M'Carthy was another of the school; whilome a gauger, but now retired on a pension and some money to boot. He was a sturdy built, low sized "gentleman" of about sixty, with tremendous grey eyebrows, always knit together, and a huge projecting under lip. He seemed as if ever revolving some unpleasant subject; and Jack was said to have a "Protestant face" too; that is, he looked as if he did not like a papist, and was therefore conscious that a papist could not like him.

And Kit Hunter was upon this morning at "school" also; and he possessed property sufficient, we will not stop to say exactly how obtained, to satisfy Dick Wresham of his pretensions to be admitted into his seminary. The wrinkles about Kit's mouth had formed themselves into a perpetual smile. He was known as the shadow of the great personage of the town, whether a Lord or a Baronet, shall not now be told. He constantly attended that great man's levée, was honored by being leant upon by him, whenever he flattered the streets by walking through them; he was always ready to run on his errands; and to crown all his glory, frequently invited to dine with, and drink the choice old wines of the high, and for the present, mysterious personage.

An easy-tempered, middle-aged man was Kit, with a great talent for picking up gossip of every kind, and for retailing it too; for it may be fairly conceded that the sack of a news-gatherer gapes almost equally at both ends. In person he was tall, slight, thin, almost emaciated, and bent and weak in the hams; and always dressed carefully and sleekly, in the best brushed clothes of the leading fashion of the day.

After the sages here particularly noticed, there were two or three others of less interest; the sentinels who filled the doorway were younger pupils, "gentlemen, bloods of the city," roystering, swaggering blades; and hoaxers or practical jokers by profession.

The "school" has repeated some of its lessons for its master, and for each other, conned since they last assembled before him. Dick Wresham, occasionally eyeing a prescription, continues:—

"Ah Kit, what about the old friar and his bell?"

"Ay, Kit, my worthy," echoed one of the sentinel wags, "tell us about the friar and his *belle*—ha, ha, ha!"

And the "ha! ha! ha!" ran through the whole "school"—for a sparkling and original witticism had been uttered.

"Ay, joke away on it," said Gaby M'Neary—"but by Gog—" and he banged his stick across Dick Wresham's "genteel" and delicate subterfuge for a counter, "you'll soon have them friars devouring up the fat of the land again. Ha, 'tishn't ould times with them now; they're creeping out of their holes among us again—an honest

man can't walk the streets without being jostled by one of them."

"And how devilish sleek the rascals look," sputtered Jack M'Carthy, knitting, wickedly, his awful, grey eyebrows.

"Well, but Kit Hunter, tell us about Father Murphy," commanded Dick Wresham impatiently.

"Why, you must know, he has built a kind of a little steeple on the gable of his chapel, and hung up a small bell in it; and this he rings out for his mass, as sturdily as if there was no law to prevent it."

"Ho!" grunted Gaby McNeary, "if that's not popish impudence, the devil's in the dice. Gog's blug!" he continued in a kind of soliloquy, puckering his lips into a fierce snarl, as he stumped about the school-room, and punched his stick downwards at every step.

"Well, Kit?" again asked Dick Wresham.

"Well; the dean was made acquainted with the matter, and requested to use his authority, in having the bell taken down, and so he called on Father Murphy for the purpose. The friar, you know is a big, bluff kind of an ould fellow—and hah! he said to the dean—'and can't I have a bell to call my coachman, and my groom, and my footmen, and all my other man servants, and ould Alley, the cook, to their dinners—eh?—ha!'"

Some laughed at Kit Hunter's anecdote; but Gaby M'Neary, and Jack M'Carthy, could only ejaculate their indignation at such a piece of audacious papistry. Kit Hunter went on.

"'You must take it down, my good sir,' said the dean.

"'Take it down, is it, after all the trouble I had putting it up? Hu! hu! no, I won't take it down; but if you want it so much, there it is—and you may climb up, and take it down yourself—hu! hu!'"

"And what did the dean say to this?" demanded Gaby M'Neary.

"Why he could say nothing at all farther, for, after pointing up at the bell, the friar walked off as fast as he could."

Gaby and Jack now expressed a huger indignation than ever. Gaby, in particular, though not feeling half of the real asperity experienced by his friend Jack, burst forth in

his might. He imprecated, he cursed, and he swore, he bellowed as he stumped about; and "the vagabones!" he went on, "there isn't a friar, no nor a priest of 'em, that I wouldn't hunt out of the counthry, over again! why they'll ride rough-shod over us, as they did before, by Gog! They walk the very middle stone of the street already—*blur-an-ages!*"

"And here is one of them walking the middle stone of the street, this very moment," reported one of the sentinels.

"Father Connell, no less—hat and wig, and all," added the other.

"*Blug-a-bouns!*" roared Gaby M'Neary, becoming almost lachrymose in his wrath—"hunt them out of the country, did I say? no, but hang 'em all up, sky high, *that* is what I meant to say!"

"He is on one of his begging expeditions to-day," again reported the faithful vidette. "Look there is Con Loughnan handing him a note, nothing less—"

Little Dickey Wresham raced to the door, thrust out his neck and head for a peep, and raced back again to his pestle and mortar. The sentinels at the doorway whispered together, and as Father Connell passed them, they saluted him very ceremoniously, and invited him to enter the school-room—he did so.

The persons among whom our parish priest now stood, seemed quite strangers to him. One of them, indeed, namely Gaby M'Neary, he might have recognised in a different light, had he been able distinctly to observe him; but at his first appearance, Gaby had flung himself upon one of the black leather-bottom chairs; and twisted it and himself facewise towards the wall.

Some of the other persons of the circle acted as follows. Kit Hunter prudently moved backwards into the shade; Jack M'Carthy tried to smile, but it was a hideous attempt—a vicious donkey might equal it; and Dick Wresham grinned most maliciously; while, for the purpose of disguising the venomous mirth, he pretended to use his teeth in assisting his fingers to tie up a paper of drugs.

It was surmised by one of the juvenile wittlings, that Father Connell was out on a mission of charity. The old priest assented.

Particulars of the case of distress which at present interested him, were politely demanded. In the simplest and the fewest words possible he told his little tale of woe. Again he was solicited to name the parties, and he named them.

"Ah, yes, sir," resumed the young "gentleman." "I might have guessed that it was for one of the fair portion of the creation your Reverence took so much trouble this cold day."

"And indeed it is to the credit of clergymen in general that they are such champions of the weaker sex," resumed his comrade.

"I remember the little Widow Fennell right well," quoth Dick Wresham, "and a plump little bit of flesh she was, and must be to the present hour."

At these words, to the surprise of all who caught the action, Gaby M'Neary suddenly turned his head over the back of his chair, and scowled very angrily at the speaker.

"There certainly is some satisfaction, in bestowing charity on such a pretty little widow," continued the chief sentinel—"one of her smiles is good value for a guinea, any day—" and he took out of his waistcoat pocket a glittering coin, and with a face of much earnestness, placed it on the priest's palm and closed the old man's fingers upon it.

Father Connell glanced, however, at the offering, and then reclosed his fingers upon it himself. The waggery and the sparkling wit went forward.

"By my oath and conscience," said the really spiteful Jack M'Carthy, "I'd give a leg of mutton and 'thrimmins' to any one that 'ud tache me the knack of making friends among the women, as the priests do."

"Why, Father Connell might give you an insight," said another, "but nothing for nothing all the world over; no money, no pathernosther—eh, Father Connell?"

Gaby M'Neary did not now look round, but he seemed to grow very uneasy or very hot on his chair.

"Father Connell is a spruce ould buck," cried little Dicky Wresham, "and there is no wonder that the women should be friendly to him."

"But how does he make the hat and wig go down with them?" resumed the brutal Jack M'Carthy.

"*Blur-an-ages-an-by-Gog!*" exploded Gaby M'Neary, jumping up at the same time, and jostling forward to where Father Connell stood—"and," he continued during his progress, "and every kind of sweet damnation seize upon my soul, if I can stand it any longer, or if I *will* stand it any longer!—give me your hand, Father Connell—how do you do, sir?"

Father Connell did as he was bid, standing somewhat aghast, however, at the roaring approach of such a forty-horse oath engine.

"Why, what are you at now, Gaby?" asked the principal hoaxer—"you that swore, as no other man can swear but you—a little while ago, that you'd hang every rascally priest of them, sky high."

"You lie, you whelp!" answered Gaby, "I never swore, nor said any such thing, you young rascal! and you're all nothing but a pack of rascals—nothing else—to bring this good-hearted ould gentlemen in here, to scoff at him, and to insult him."

"Well done, Gaby," shouted the second hoaxer, and he slapped old Gaby on the shoulder.

"Do that again, ye *hout*,* and I'll dust your puppy's jacket, while a dusting is good for it or you!" and he flourished his stick about him, at a rate that made his old friends jump out of his way; while the only object he hit was the hat of the very person whose champion he now was, and this, with the violence of his unintended blow, flew some distance off its accustomed resting-place. But Gaby soon picked it up, replaced it on the apex of the wig, and then slapped it down with a force that betokened, in his own fitting apprehension, much friendly energy, and a liberal promise of chivalrous protection towards the wearer.

"Come away, Father Connell, out of this blackguard place," he went on, passing the priest's arm through his, "come along, sir, come along, I tell you!"

"My dear," said Father Connell, laying his hand on the arm of his doughty defender, "do not get angry, do not curse or swear on my account; these gentlemen have done

me no harm ; I wish I could say they had done them ~~me~~ any good ; nor have they been as successful in ridiculing me as they think ; neither my years, now nearly fourscore, nor my hat and wig have made me so very stupid as they suppose. As for the witty young gentleman who gave me this," and he held out the counterfeit guinea on his open palm, and then allowed it to drop on the floor at his foot—"I won't say God reward him, no, no ;" the old man shook his head, touched the brim of his hat, and looked upward—"the reward, if my poor prayer were heard, might be in proportion to the gift ; but I can, and I do say—God ~~or~~ give him."

"Hah ! take that, you dirty curs !" triumphed Gaby M'Neary, as he and Father Connell turned into the street.

To the great surprise of the whole town, the pair were in a few minutes after seen parading the streets arm in arm, and begging of every one they mutually knew, a donation for the poor Fennells. Protestant and Catholic looked after them as they marched along ; and, agreeing in opinion for at least once in their lives, sagely remarked, that "wonders would never cease."

In the heat of his charitable enthusiasm—as much one may venture to say, as in the heat of his wrath, against Dick Wresham's "dirty curs"—Gaby's own contribution to Father Cornell's list was large, almost out of character. But this was not all. He led him to his own house, and there "made much of him ;" and over a hearty luncheon, and a glass of good wine, Gaby M'Neary requested and obtained a minute account of the former and the present situation of the poor family for whom he sought relief.

To every word the old priest uttered, Gaby's only daughter was an attentive listener. This little girl may be called very lovely—very, very lovely. Her age was not more than ten years. No description of her face or person is about to follow ; but it is asserted over again that little Helen M'Neary was very, very lovely, and bright, laughing, joyous—a very sunburst of beauty, flashing over the freshness of life's almost break of day.

During the priest's statements, however, little Helen showed none of her usual brilliant joyousness. Her features became gently sorrowful, and tears started from her

eyes. Father Connell took leave of his new friend. At the door of the house he felt his jock pulled, and turning round he saw this beautiful little being looking up earnestly at him, and moving her fingers in a mute request that he might bend down to her. He laid his open palm upon her shining hair—of the same color, by the way, as that of the poor little beggar girl—gazed in smiles, for a space, upon her glowing upturned features; and muttered involuntarily —“may the Lord bless you, my little angel.”

She beckoned to him again, and he bent his ear to her lips.

“I got this for a Christmas-box,” she whispered, sliding half-a-guinea into his hand—“but will you give it, sir, along with the rest you have, to poor Mrs. Fennell, and her old aunt, and to poor little Neddy?—Oh, you’re hurting me, sir!” she suddenly cried out, pained by Father Connell’s ardent pressure of both her tiny hands in his. He relaxed his unconscious clasp; but still held her tightly, and he still gazed at her, his lips working to keep in his emotion.

“Helen! Helen! where are you, girl?” bellowed out her father, descending the staircase.

“Good-bye to you, sir,” she continued, again endeavoring to extricate her fingers.

“*Blug-a-bouns!* what’s all this?” questioned her father, making his appearance.

“Your little daughter,” answered Father Connell, “is a blessed child. She is beautiful to look upon; but her fresh young heart is more beautiful still. See—she has given me, for the poor widow, what was bestowed upon her these happy Christmas-times, to buy playthings and sweet things—and she is only a little girl still,”—he inclined his head, and laid his cheek to Helen’s—“I thought at first of giving back her little gift;—and I thought too of bestowing upon her a Christmas-box, and a good one, out of my own pocket; but I won’t do either.”

“Don’t, don’t,” roared Gaby M’Neary, half crying, “*blug-an-ages!*”

“No: I will not; no, my child, I will not, I’ll leave it in the hands of your God to repay you for your charity. Here, sir—take your little daughter to you, and kiss her, and be proud of her.” He took up the child, placed her in her father’s arms, and left the houses.

CHAPTER XII.

Yet another school-house is to be visited, and it will make the third presented in these pages. But monotony need not, therefore, be apprehended; for, if Dick Wresham's school has been found unlike Father Connell's school—and there is little doubt but it has—that which must now be described will prove unlike either.

And the "main street," is again to be recurred to. Jammed in between two mere modern houses with shop windows, there was in it a curious old structure, or rather a succession of very curious old structures, situated to the rear of this introductory one. It had a high parapeted front, over which arose a gable, very sharp-angled at top, and surmounted by a tall roundish stone chimney.

A semicircular archway, gained by a few steps, ran through it from the street, and led into a small quadrangle, one side of which was formed by its own back, and the other three sides by similar old buildings; that side to your left being partially dilapidated. A second semicircular archway passed under the pile confronting you, as you entered the enclosure from the street, and gave egress into a second, but larger quadrangle. Of this, the far or top side was composed of one range of an old edifice, still; that behind you of the rear of the house that fronted you, in the lesser quadrangle, that to your right, of other ancient buildings entirely ruinous; and that to your left, partly of a dead wall, partly of a shed, before which was a bench of mason-work, and partly of a little nook, containing some evergreens, and remarkable for affording place to a queer sentry-box kind of structure, built of solid stone.

And now there was yet a third archway before you, but much narrower than the others, and very much darker, boring its way under the lower part of the structure facing you. In traversing it, your eye caught, to your right hand, doorways imperfectly filled up by old oak doors, half hanging off their old-times hinges, and leading into large, unoccupied, coal black chambers; and when you emerged from it, the cheery daylight was again around you, in a third enclosed space, of which the most remarkable feature was

a long flight of wide stone steps, terminating in a sharply arched door, which led into an elevated garden.

Why dwell on the features of the odd old place? Has no one guessed? Here, Father Connell put his adopted son to school. Here was the scene of years of that boy's pains and pleasures, sports and tasks, tears and laughter—likings and dislikings—friendships—nay, of a stronger and a higher passion, which though conceived in mere boyhood, passed into his youthful prime, and afterwards swayed and shaped the fate, not only of himself, but alas! of his aged protector. and
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All the nooks and corners of the odd, old place, were all, all the playgrounds of him and his school-fellows. He will stop to this day, before the streetward archway, and look into the two quadrangles, until recollected pleasure becomes present pain. For as he looks, his mind's eye sees, flitting and jumping through the sunshine and the shade, with which they are chequered, the features and forms of those early mates; and his ears seem to hear their shouts, and their shrill untirable gabble; until anon, he seems to distinguish the very accents of their voices, and even by that knows them from each other; and at last they pipe out his own name, and he is sure what boys from time to time utter it! And then, turning away from the old archway, he asks himself—what days have since been like the days which his passing vision has just given him back? What hour of satiated passion, what hour of worldly success, has been worth one minute of the passionless, thoughtless pleasures, experienced within the intricacies and the quaintnesses of the odd, old place?

And, as he plods along the streets of his native town, other questions and recollections come upon him. He calls to mind some of his fancies; for instance, of the kind of old people, who must originally have inhabited the jumble of old structures—who were they? What did they there? What did they look like? How were they dressed? He did not know a bit at that time; still he used to imagine them clad in long robes of black or dark grey, silently moving about their then silent little squares, or sitting stock still on the bench in the larger one; or gliding (not walking) up the long flight of stone steps to their primitive garden; (and what in the world used to grow in that

garden?) or, mysteriously vanishing into the large, black-chambers, to be found to the right of the third archway.

And the imps his fancy has just seen! Their progress from childhood, or boyhood, into manhood! But Ned Fennell will insist upon this topic more at length in another place. For the passing instant, he can do little else than boast of all his old haunts of play and frolic.

In the middle of the inner quadrangle, there used to be a roundish space, quite smooth, and well sanded over, while the rest of the yard around it was roughly paved—and could human foresight have contrived anything more appropriate for the marble ring, and the pegtop ring? In “hide and seek,” where could the appointed seeker find such a retreat as the old stone sentry-box—the boys called it an old confessional—in which to turn away his head and eyes, until the other urchins should have concealed themselves among some of the fantastic recesses around them? And where could leap-frog be played so well, as under the old archways?—and if a sudden shower came on, how conveniently they afforded shelter from it! To such of the boys as had courage for the undertaking, what places above ground, ay, or underground, so fit for enacting “the ghost,” as were the pandemonium retreats of the black chambers of the third archway? Was there ever so luxurious a seat for a tired boy to cast himself upon, fanning his scarletted face with his hat, as that offered to him by the bench in the larger quadrangle, canopied over head by its two umbrageous sycamores, one at its either end? Or, if a poor boy happened to play too much, and too long, and were summoned up to his task, without having conned a single word of it, what crumbling old walls under the sun could compare with those at the opposite side of the square, for supplying in perfection a weed called—locally at least—“Peniterry,” to which the suddenly terrified idler might run in his need, grasping it hard and threateningly, and repeating the following “words of power :”

“ Peniterry, peniterry, that grows by the wall,
Save me from a whipping, or I pull you roots and all.”

And there was a third sycamore, in a corner belonging to a thrush, who from year to year built her nest, and brought forth her young in it, and she was the best fed thrush in

the world. Her nest lay almost on a level with one of the school-room windows—you could nearly touch her, by stretching out your arm from it—and outside this window projected a broken slate, constantly kept filled with various kinds of provisions, for her and her family. Her husband seemed to grow lazy under these circumstances. He would scarce ever leave home in quest of food, and, indeed, do little else than perch upon the very topmost bough over her head, and whistle to her all day long. As for herself, she seemed, out of her trustiness in her little purveyors, to live in a delightful state of happy quietude. Not a bit startled was she, or even put out, by all their whoopings and uproar in the yard below. Nay, she seemed to take a matronly interest in their studies too; for the boys of the head class, during school-hours, could plainly see her sitting on her eggs, while they sat to their books or slates, and they would fancy that her little, round, diamonded eye, used to be watching them.

Well. The old house confronting you, as you entered the first quadrangle from the street, and the rear of which looked into the second quadrangle, was the old school-house. Passing its sharply arched doorway of stone, you entered a hall, floored with old black oak, and ascended a spiral staircase of black oak, coiling round an upright of black oak, and stepped into the school-room, floored with black oak, and divided by a thick partition of black oak from the master's bed-chamber; in fact, all the partitions, all the doors, all the stairs, all the ceiling-beams—and ponderous things they were—down stairs, and up stairs, through the interior of the crude old edifice, were all, all old black oak, old black oak, nearly as hard as flint, and seemingly rough from the hatchet, too; and the same was the case in the interiors of the other inhabitable portions of the concatenation of ancient buildings.

Through the partition separating his bed-chamber from the school-room, the head of the seminary had bored a good many holes, nearly an inch in diameter, some straight-forward, some slantingly, to enable himself to peer into every corner of the study, before entering it each morning; and this is to be kept in mind. At either end of the long apartment was a large square window, framed with stone, and, indeed, stone also in its principal divisions. Over

head ran the enormous beams of old oak, and in the spaces between them were monotonous flights, all in a row, and equally distant from each other, of monotonous angels, in stucco—the usual children's heads, with goose wings shooting from under their ears; and sometimes one or two of these angels became fallen angels, flapping down on clipped wings either upon the middle of the floor, or else upon the boys' heads, as they sat to their desks, and confusing them, and their books, and slates with fragments of stucco and mortar, rotten laths, and rusty nails.

In a kind of recess, on the side of the school-room opposite to the boys' double desks, was an old table, flanked by a form, to which, at certain hours of the day, sat some half-dozen young girls, from six to ten years, who came up from the quaint old parlor below, under the care of the master's daughter, who therein superintended their education in inferior matters, to be occasionally delivered into his hands for more excelling instruction.

The principal of this celebrated seminary wrote himself down in full, and in a precise, round hand, James Charles Buchmahon; and his establishment as "the English Academy;—principal, we have called him—despotic monarch, we should have called him; for he never had had more than one assistant, and the head of that one he broke before they had been many weeks together.

And never were absolute monarchy, and deep searching scrutiny, more distinctly stamped and carved on any countenance, than upon that of James Charles Buchmahon, master of the English Academy. And that countenance was long and of a soiled sallow color; and the puckering of his brows and eyelids awful; and the unblinking steadiness of his blueish grey eyes insufferable; and the cold-blooded resoluteness of his marbly lips unrelaxable. At the time we speak of him, James Charles Buchmahon might have been between fifty and sixty, but he wore well. He was tall, with a good figure and remarkably well-turned limbs, "and he had the gift to know it," for in order not to hide a point of the beauty of those limbs from the world, he always arrayed them in very tight-fitting pantaloons, which reached down to his ankles. His coat and waistcoat were invariably black. A very small white muslin cravat, and a frill sticking out quite straight from his

breast, occupied the space from his chin to his waist. And James Charles Buchmahon's hat was of cream-color beaver, high crowned, and broad-brimmed: and he even carried either a formidable walking-stick of stout oak, or else a substitute for it, made of five or six peeled switches, cunningly twisted together, and at one end loaded with lead.

It has been hinted that Ned Fennell has promised us some further notice of a few of his former playmates; the subjects over whom, in common with himself, the master of the English Academy held sway; and this is the place into which again, in the teeth of our critical remonstrances, he beseechingly insists to be permitted to introduce his little living picture-gallery. It is not quite waywardness, he says, which induces him to be so pertinacious. Admitting some yearning, for mere feeling's sake, to reproduce and record characters, once either dear or interesting to him, Ned will have it, that he can prove, by his faithful portraiture of their early bent, and its similarity with their eventual fortunes or fate, how true it is, that the sapling contains the full-grown tree;—that “the child is father to the man.”

CHAPTER XIII.

FIRST, then, Ned presents his friend James Graham, his old, old friend—even to this very blessed day and hour, his old friend.

James was an English boy—a curiosity of course to the whole school; a small-boned, wiry little fellow, and not remarkable for first-rate talent. But he was remarkable for, perhaps, a still better kind of talent—that, namely, of untiring industry and application, which, in the end, enabled him to sweep out of his way all scholastic difficulties. And even in those early days of his life, James Graham had prudence and foresight, ay, and thrift enough, for forty years of age. In everything that concerned him he went steadily on, looking neither to the right nor to the

left, by the shortest road to his object. After school was dismissed, and when almost every other boy loitered to play, James would race home as fast as he could, to con his tasks for the following morning ; and sometimes, to be sure, some of his classmates, after having worked for the purpose, like mill horses, an hour or so, would succeed in putting him down in his class ; but, after that, it behoved them to be watchful and continuously industrious ; for if they were not, little lank James Graham, who was always watchful, always industrious, and always prepared, would be sure to step up again. James's father resided in the country ; while he boarded and lodged in an humble, respectable family, in the town. He was allowed a certain weekly sum for what his friends considered necessary expenses, apart from his boarding and lodging. But out of this sum, limited, of course, as it was, James contrived to save money for the future—absolutely for the future, almost in the full meaning of the word. Partly in the following manner.

Pending from small nails inside his trunk—Ned Fennell often saw the arrangement—were little cotton bags, one containing half-pence, another penny-pieces, another five-penny silver pieces, another ten-penny silver pieces, another half-crowns, another whole crowns, and the last golden guineas, or else pound-notes. And when his half-pence amounted to penny-pieces, he would transfer them in that shape to the next little bag ; and when that contained something above five-penny pieces he would confirm them into the smallest silver coin ; and so on and on he went in rotation, through all his little satchels, until finally half-pence, &c. &c., merged into the guinea or the pound-note.

But though thus saving, he did not hoard like a miser,—a title given to him by commonplace observers at school, whose chance pence used to “burn their pockets,” as they themselves admitted, until they threw them away upon the purchase of some unnecessary toy or sweet-thing. From James's wealth first resulted a full though miniature library of “the British classics ;” and having since carried into more active life, and even into the mighty competition of the city of cities, matured and confirmed, his early school-boy characteristics, it is many years since he has

reaped the solid advantages which, when almost a child, they assuredly promised to him.

"Dear James!" adds Ned Fennell, "I do not yet well know why so perfect a character as yourself ever could like, or love a harum-scarum fellow, like what I then was; and yet you did—and some of my school cronies, along with me; ay, and often made us the better of your little pocket library too. To be sure they and I always used to fit your boxing battles for you, at any odds against all your gibing or cowardly assailants; and though you were not a frolicsome boy, you were a mirthful one; and at last, we could often make you laugh heartily, in your queer, English way, at our queer Irish fun—ay, and now and then join in it too, under sufficient protection; for your frame, dear James, was not strong enough for all the haps of school-boy adventure and warfare; still I do not know how it was that you loved us, and to this day do love us so well; except indeed, my conjecture be right, that your good nature was equal to your other good qualities."

George Booth very little resembled James Graham. He was the biggest and tallest boy in the school. In fact he was eighteen or nineteen—and quite a giant compared with every other boy around him. Yet he never could acquire enough to entitle him to a place in the head class, and so was always a member of some inferior one, where he towered above his companions—very little fellows indeed—like Gulliver among the Lilliputions. Still it was in stature only that he surpassed even these—ay, or even equalled them. He was always at the tail of his class—or, as the little people termed it, "Paddy last," and as a matter of consequence, George Booth wore, nearly from morning to night, the idler's cap—a curious head-gear enough, and of such a height, as to make George seem nearly twice as tall as he really was.

But all this seemed to give George very little trouble. Day after day, he bore, with a stolid, unwincing endurance, his coronation as monarch of dunces, and the sore humiliations, scoffs, and insults resulting therefrom. In fact, he seemed to have made up his mind, that he had been sent to school for the purpose, and for no other, of wearing the idler's cap; and as he plodded home every evening, George used to be heavily good-humored and jocose, in

his own peculiar way, as if he felt convinced, that he had gone through his day's duty with consistent credit to himself.

Before school broke up, each day, all who could tack words of two syllables together, stood in a semicircle round the room, first, second, third, or fourth classes as it might be. Upon these occasions, if a boy of an inferior class spelt correctly a word, which his neighbor in a higher one had "missed," James Charles Buchmahon's discipline to meet the case was rather singular. As no member of the third class, suppose, could take the place of one of the second class, he was entitled, as an equivalent triumph over the dunce of the moment, to seize his nose between his right finger and thumb, and so lead him round the school-room. Now it may be believed, that George Booth, very often, subjected his organ of smell to such vile usage. But in the contrivances of the little fellow—scarce higher than George's knee—to lay hold on George's nose, much of the interest of the scene consisted. From some oiliness of surface, or else fleshy elasticity, peculiar to it, the feature was very slippery, so that when the tiny boy, helped by a good jump upwards, succeeded in catching it, it would slip, over and over, through his fingers, until James Charles Buchmahon, to end the proceeding, would, in the calmest but most authoritative tone, direct George Booth to bend himself half double, so as that his countenance might come within reach of the pigmy aspirant; and George would quietly obey, and then be led about, amid the laughter and shouts of all the lookers-on; and yet, when he was again allowed to stand upright in his class, neither shame, nor sorrow, nor excitement could be traced in his pale, fat countenance. And so far George's character seemed legible enough. Blockheadism and insensibility to disgrace very fairly go together. But there were some points about him which no human being, not even James Charles Buchmahon, could comprehend: certain dull, muddy, and it must have been unintended quiddities, laboring, like asthmatic lungs, in the recesses of his brain—or rather of whatever it was which stood in the place of brains to him. For instance, he would now and then be imaginative, forsooth; but we cannot venture, no more than James Charles Buchmahon could, to define these precious portions of

George's mental existence or consciousness. An illustration of them in facts, shall, however, be attempted.

As if beginning to grow a little tired of performing his daily duty, under the edifice of the idler's cap, George, one sunny autumn morning, after breakfast, took a stroll into the country, instead of going back to the English Academy; and all that day he was not to be heard of until hunger at last drove him home to his father's house.

And next day, he took his place as "Paddy last" in his class, apparently as undisturbed as if there were no reckoning in store for him; or as if there had been in existence no such man as James Charles Buchmahon, master of the English Academy; and for a time George seemed perfectly right.

A good portion of the day wore on, George sat looking down on his book, his mouth, as well as his eyes, wide open, as if he were wondering at some crabbed Chinese manuscript. James Charles Buchmahon, after hearing many classes in rotation, stood, according to invariable custom, before his magisterial desk, scraping, and paring, and splitting, and nibbing pens, and placing them in most formal rows upon its outer ledge. The boys were all engaged, or seemingly so, in conning fresh tasks, until the pens should be quite ready to enable them to engage in writing their copies. During his progress of scraping and so on, James Charles Buchmahon, looking over his spectacles, and under his eyebrows, sent his searching glances round and round the room, nay, from each individual boy to the other. There was almost dead silence, as was usual in the school-room at this time every day, when the words "George Booth," pronounced in the slowest and most deep and solemn manner, by James Charles Buchmahon, sounded through the stilly school-room. George Booth looked in the well-known direction of the summoner—his miserable features suddenly jerking themselves, as it were, from their expression of inane stupidity into contortions and twistings of a horrible kind; and his terrified glance informed him that the fore-finger of a certain right hand was slowly beckoning him up to the judgment-seat. The fore-doomed wretch arose and advanced—now gulping down something, every other instant, as if he were vainly

endeavoring to swallow back again the sickening fears that bubbled up from his heart.

"George Booth, you were yesterday absent from the English Academy."

"Yes, sir," (gulp).

"And pray where did you spend the day, George Booth?"

"In Sir John's wood, sir, picking nuts."

"Humph!" James Charles Buchmahon interrupted himself in his process of mending the pens, and stared straight forward, into poor George's blinking, pig's eyes, as if seriously endeavoring to make him out. The conference was resumed.

"Very good! And pray, Mr. George Booth, at whose suggestion did you go to Sir John's wood, to pick nuts?"

"At—" (a great gulp—another, and another) "at Satan's, sir."

"At whose?"

"Satan's, sir."

James Charles Buchmahon now laid down the pen-knife, and placed the pen beside it, and there was another look into George's eyes, and through and through them, until it could almost be seen coming out at the back of his skull.

"Satan's, you say, sir?"

"Yes, sir."

"Will you be good enough, Mister George Booth, to say also in what manner Satan and you happened to interchange words on the subject?"

"Sir?"

"Where did you meet Satan, Mr. George Booth?"

"I saw him, sir, up—" George became at fault, and swallowed the air more violently than ever.

"Up where, pray?"

"Up—up in the clouds, sir—at the top of Meeting-House Lane," the land that led directly from his own street into the country.

"Very good, again, sir. And pray what kind of person is Satan?"

"He's—just—about your size, sir," and George bobbed his head, as if the confession he had made required something like an apologetic bow; while James Charles Buch-

mahon deliberately raised his cream-colored hat from his head, bowed very formally and politely in his turn, and then replaced his beaver. But oh! even George Booth could comprehend that this excessive politeness boded him no good.

"Well, sir, about my size, you say: will you please to favor me with a more detailed description? Was there any further likeness?"

"No, sir," George hastened to aver—"No, 'pon my word and credit, sir!"

"Well, sir—go on with your description."

"He was black, sir—and he had horns and the tail, sir;—and he had hoofs on him, sir, instead of shoes."

"I—see. Well, what words did he address to you?"

"'George,' says he"—(gulp).

"Well sir?"

"'George,' says he, 'don't go to school to the English Academy to-day,' says he."

"Well?"

"'But go out to Sir John's wood,' says he, 'and pick nuts,' says he—'there's the best nuts in the whole country there,' says he."

"Any other conversation between you, sir?"

"No, sir."

During the last part of the catechism, James Charles Buchmahon had advanced a step, and now, with one blow, the unhappy being was stretched at full length upon the old oaken floor, which shook under him, as he roared like a bull-calf.

This was, indeed, an unusual proceeding on the part of the systematic master of the English Academy, but it will be recollected that there was no boy in the school of sufficient years or strength to bear George Booth's weight upon his shoulders, so that George might have had the advantage of receiving ideas from the fangs of the cat-o'-nine-tails; while in the apprehension—or rather in the momentary fancy of James Charles Buchmahon, for, to this hour, even he has not been able to arrive at certainty upon the point—some punishment became indispensable for George's attempt to enact the mere idiot.

And George Booth, from that day to this, through all the progress and changes of advanced life, has remained

"last in his class," and seems quite satisfied with his position.

It is to be added, however, that very, very strange to say, after having become married, and after having swelled into a truly Falstaff shape, George, at the appointment of his wife, has turned schoolmaster himself; for she keeps a seminary, in which children are taught the first rude combinations of their alphabet; and he perhaps feels a re-acting pleasure in exercising his late-come power of torturing the poor little animals into a comprehension of a process which he himself could never understand.

Tommy Palmer comes next; he is called Tommy rather than Thomas, because he had been always so called in the old school-house, the sound of the word seeming more expressive of his character.

Tommy can scarce be recollected as racing about at play-hour, with the general throng, or as ever joining in a game of ball, or top, or of marbles. Neither was he ever at the head of his class, though by no means often at the tail of it. And yet he did not want power of body or of intellect, either for play or for study; he was only always ashamed of trying to compete with anybody in any thing. *Mauvaise honte* was the devil that beset him. He would blush suddenly, to the very top of his forehead, if abruptly spoken to, on the most indifferent subject; and if once he made a slip, in repeating his lesson, Tommy became so confounded that any attempt to mend the matter only plunged him, head over ears, into the most helpless state of confusion.

Once, while standing up in his class, Tommy was reading the anecdote in Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*, which gives an account of a French peasant's supper, and of a succeeding dance, before engaging in which, the young people took off their "*sabots* or wooden shoes." Tom read out very distinctly, "their *sabots* or wooden dishes."

"Wooden wha-at?" questioned James Charles Buchmahon.

"Wooden dishes, sir," repeated Tommy Palmer.

"Look at it, if you please, deeree." Tommy knew, as so did all the other boys, that the term "deeree," meant anything on earth but kindness.

But he looked on the book with the most intense anxiety,

while James Charles looked him with the full power of his large, frozen, blue eye.

"Well—dearee?"

"Wooden dishes," again read out poor Tommy Palmer.

"Open your eyes, pet, and try it again."

Taking the command literally, he elevated his eyebrows to their utmost stretch, and strained his eyes till their balls seemed ready to fall out; still, he could absolutely see nothing on the page but wooden dishes. James Charles Buchmahon advanced with the cat-o'-nine-tails, and the poor fellow felt her claws on the backs of his hands, on his head, and about his legs; still and still, "wooden shoes," as plain as the printer could print the words, were, to his vision, nothing but "wooden dishes."

Many years afterwards, Tommy Palmer was met by an old school-fellow in the throng of the great metropolis. His father had procured for him a situation in a government office. His old friend encountered him, mid the roar and clatter of Fleet Street, and cordially and suddenly addressed him, holding out his hand. Tommy stepped back; staring, blushing, stammering, and wringing his fingers. In fact, to London he had carried—that excellent market for disposing of it—his whole stock of *mauvaise honte*, being about twenty-five years of age at that time; and, in his new position, on he went, blushing and stammering, and calling "wooden shoes" "wooden dishes," until, although no dunce, he was returned on his father's hands, with the character of having been found unfit for the discharge of a duty which any dunce could have got through.

Mick Hanlon was, at thirteen, the bully of the school,—but nothing else. Not that he wanted capacity for obtaining scholastic distinction, but that his ambition always aimed at the "bad eminence" surrendered to him. He was a boy of low stature for his years, with a fierce eye, a fleshy, out-curved defying lip, and a manner always overbearing. His shoulders were broad enough for a person six inches taller; his arms long, and his nether limbs muscular and hard. In running, in leaping, in wrestling, in boxing, Mick had no rival.—Except a few who kept aloof from him, he brought every boy in the school to acknowledge his absolute supremacy, and his slaves submitted to him in mingled terror and admiration. Having

thrashed into submission any one who dared to dispute his rule, he would next thrash, just as soundly, any one who even presumed "to look crooked" at his newly made vassal.

Such was Mick at thirteen. At about two-and-twenty, after having, on a St. Patrick's-day, "in the evening," overwhelmed, at the head of a gang of youthful worshippers of the saint, the whole city constabulary, who were about the streets to keep peace and order, Mick next charged a guard of soldiers, who were coming to supply their place, and died on the point of one of their bayonets—the weapon, in his tiger spring forward and upward, having directly entered the young bravo's heart.

And there was Joe White, who, when directed, in common with his classmates, to tack two lines of poetry to the end of a prose theme, produced, after days of effort—

"Joe White, my hand and pen
Will be good, but God knows when."

And Joe died, prematurely, an ensign in a militia regiment—the butt and the sot of its mess.

And upon the same occasion, Joe's constant crony, John Arran, rivalled him in a distich—

"Sticks and stones,
And dead men's bones."

And John, refusing to be sent to college, and afterwards placed in a liberal profession, upon leaving the English Academy, is now only a hosier—and a hosier of no great parts either.

It may be added, that a third aspirant for the poetic wreath, Keeran Fitzgerald, who would be original, produced the following admirable couplet—

"It's a very fine thing, for a boy to follow,
The tune of the harp, that's played by Apollo."

And that Keeran, during his whole life afterwards, was, indeed, very original in every respect, with, however, about as much claim to eminence, or common sense, in his originality, as may be found in the lines, for which posterity are indebted to him alone.

And in the English Academy, there were two or three

very dirty fellows—dirty in their persons and attire, as well as in their minds and sensations—dirty fellows inside as well as outside ;—and dirty fellows of exactly the same description they continue to be to this very hour.

And mean boys that have only grown into mean middle-aged men. And generous boys, who at five-and-forty, are still generous. And gentlemanlike boys who, through their whole after-lives, have always been gentlemanly. And all the boys who have been "Paddy lasts" in the English Academy, are "Paddy lasts" in the world. And the great majority of its pupils were content with middle places in their class—and farther than middle places they have never got into in society.

And very few indeed, of all that miniature crowd, struck out for real fame or eminence in any way—but it is a grateful and a gracious duty to add, that they who did so, in verity and from the heart, have since reached the smiling shore of their boyhood's ambition : not one of them, at all events, has been drowned in his bold struggle to attain it.

CHAPTER XIV.

SOMETIMES even the redoubtable James Charles Buchmahon, master of the English Academy, used to indulge in a social glass after dinner—nay, after supper, too, with a few select friends ; and the following day, was sure to remain longer than was his wont, in his bed-chamber. By some means or other, the young gentlemen of his seminary were scarcely ever ignorant of the recurrences of such evenings ; and consequently, for an hour or so, upon the mornings that succeeded them, the school-room of the English Academy used to be very unusually relaxed in discipline. It was, indeed, rather a venturesome thing, even with the temptation mentioned, to utter a loud breath, or for a moment vacate a seat, when, as will be remembered, the young students were divided from the awful bed-room by an oak plank, solely ; to say nothing of the spy-holes

which James Charles Buchmahon had bored through the old partition.

It is evident, however, to the meanest capacity—and even George Booth quite understood the matter—that if the spy-holes were good for the master's *espionage* upon the boys, they were just as good for the *espionage* of the boys upon the master—and, indeed, they were as often used one way as the other. Almost every morning in the year, reconnoitering parties were appointed from the first and second classes, who, with the help of those spy-holes, and their own eyes, telegraphed through the school the most minute proceeding of James Charles, from the instant he gave the first stir in his bed, until he laid his hand on the door-handle, to pass out to begin his duties for the day; and it need not be added, that upon the especial occasions of stolen enjoyment alluded to, our young acquaintances were most particularly watchful. It is, then, one of these half-holiday mornings before breakfast. The school abounds with fun and gambol, Neddy Fennell being one of the greatest, if not the very greatest truant among all his compeers. James Charles has been sleeping later than ever was known before; and his subjects, believing that he must have been very drunk indeed the previous night, happily conjecture that he may not waken time enough for the morning lessons—nay, nor for the afternoon lessons—nay, that under Providence he may never waken at all.

But a change soon occurred in Neddy Fennell's sportive idling.

Mention has been made of some very dirty fellows in the English Academy. They were in their own way jocose fellows, too, particularly upon this memorable morning. They had prepared a little blank paper book, and written upon each of its pages words that betokened, they said, a future fortune of some kind or other, to any or everybody who, by insinuating a pin between two of its leaves, should cause the mystic volume to unfold. The device was not a very original one in the school; and when practised by boys of anything like neatness of mind, produced much harmless fun. But in their hands the simple plaything, from the nature of the matter they had scribbled through it, degenerated, of course, merely into a vehicle of nastiness.

Neddy Fennell passed them after they had just offended—ay, and abashed to the very crown of his head, Tommy Palmer, by inducing him to read his future destiny; our little friend could also see that James Graham's eyes were fixed on the dirty fellows with deep indignation. They enjoyed, however, the success of their joint invention in fits of smothered laughter; and he overheard them arrange to have "rare sport" among the girls at the other side of the room, so soon as they should come up from the parlor to receive their morning lessons at the hands of James Charles Buchmahon. He started, reddened, and said, "I'll try my fortune too."

They held the book of prophecy to him. He divided its leaves in the usual manner, and read something very like what he had expected. He turned over some more of its leaves, and became satisfied of the nature of all its contents. Just then, the young girl sentered the school-room, chaperoned by their mistress as far as the door. Neddy glanced towards one of the little troop, and his blood boiled.

"You shall never take this fortune-book to the other side of the room, you blackguards," said Neddy.

"An' who'll hinder us?" asked they.

"I'll hinder you," he replied, and he put the book into one of the side pockets of his jacket.

There was a remonstrance, and then a pulling and dragging scuffle, and at last a boxing-match; the two dirty fellows, now even more cowardly than they were dirty, falling together upon one little boy, much their inferior in years, height, weight, and strength, while he, nothing daunted, jumped about them, rolling his little fists round each other, making a good hit whenever he could, and taking all their heavy punishment like a Trojan. But he could not fail having the worst of it. His lips and nose were bruised, and spouted with blood; his left eye became unwillingly half shut up, and he staggered often, and was clean knocked down at last.

A little scream came from the girl's table, and at the same moment one of the dirty fellows said, "The master is coming out."

"Wait till I see," said Neddy, "and if he is not, I'll come back to you."

He ran round the long desk, and was just applying his

eye—his only available one—to one of the spy-holes, when, ye gods!—another eye, a well-known, large, grey, bluish eye, a cold, shiny, white and blue delft eye, was in the act of doing the same thing at the other side of the anger-hole.

Neddy's first impulse was, of course, to start back in terror; but the next instant, he stuck his own eye as closely as ever he could, into the opening, shrewdly judging, that such a proceeding was the only one which could hinder his opponent from noting and ascertaining his personal identity. And now it became a real trial of skill and endurance between the two eyes; but, oh! the horrors of the ordeal that Neddy had to endure! Sometimes, the large greyish blue eye would withdraw itself about the fourth part of an inch, from its own side of the partition, as if to admit light enough into the orifice, to enable it to mark the rival orb, and connect it with its owner; and then, the cold, freezy scintillations which shot from it curdled his very blood! Sometimes it would adhere as closely to its end of the hole, as did Neddy's at the other end; and then all was darkness to Neddy's vision—but he thought the fringes of the two eyelids touched! and his trembling limbs scarce supported him. He winked, and blinked, and so did the antagonist organ, and then he became assured that the opposing eyelashes absolutely intertangled, and felt as if his own optic was to be drawn out of his head. Mental delusion almost possessed him. The cold, greyish blue eye seemed to become self-irradiated, and to swell into the compass of a shining crown-piece, while it darted into his rays of excruciating light. Still, however, he courageously held on, until at last, James Charles Buchmahon gave up the contest, and withdrew towards his bed-room door; upon which Neddy hastened to his place at his desk, but not before he had ascertained by a glance across the room, that the two dirty fellows, having filched the fortune-book from his pocket during his late trepidation, were in the act of introducing it to the notice of the little dames, who sat to the old table in the recess. In fact, the alarm had been given by one of the dirty fellows, that "the master was coming," was but a ruse to send Neddy to the spy-hole, in order to enable himself the more easily to recover his precious property; and this was now evident, from the two

friends being seen, without the least apprehension of the approach of that said master, endeavoring, in high glee, to impart a portion of their own nastiness to the pure little hearts and minds before them. Neddy had scarcely resumed his seat, when James Charles entered the school-room, and Neddy's eyes, or rather eye, fastened on his book. Almost at the same moment, the little voice—Neddy knew it well—which had before uttered a little scream, broke into a sudden fit of crying. Neddy again glanced at the girl's table. The child who was crying, had just flung into the middle of the room the atrocious fortune-book; and he was about to vault across the desk a second time, to possess himself of the evidence of blackguardism, when James Charles Buchmahon saved him the trouble, by picking it up himself.

The two detected dirty fellows were slinking to their places. "Have the goodness to stand where ye are, gentlemen," entreated James Charles Buchmahon. They stood stock still before him. He sat down to his desk, put on his spectacles, and deliberately began to read the fortune-book.

In a few seconds he suddenly stopped reading, drew his chair smartly back from his desk, raised his hands and eyes, and then screwed the latter into those of the base culprits; he resumed his studies, again pushed back from the desk, again made a silent appeal upwards, and again as silently told the two dirty fellows what he thought of their playful device, and of themselves, and what they had to expect for their cleverness. Having quite finished the rare volume, he stood up, and beckoned them towards him.

They came. He held it open in his hand, before their eyes, pointed to it, and uttered the one word, "read." He then pointed to the girls' table, tapped the now closed book with his fore-finger; slowly opened his desk, slowly deposited therein the "sybilline leaves," and uttered another monosyllable—"kneel."

The despairing blackguards knelt.

"No!" interrupted James Charles Buchmahon, with great and severe dignity, stepping back from them—"I was wrong; do not kneel; go on all-fours; prop yourselves on your knees and hands together, and remain in that position; I will explain why to you, anon."

Again they obeyed him, their dirty faces growing pallid as death, and their dirty hearts quailing with an undefinable fear and horror at this unprecedented proceeding.

James Charles Buchmahon again returned to the desk, now standing upright before it, however. Very slowly and solemnly he next drew out his pocket-handkerchief, used it—and what a quavering, trumpet sound there then was!—folded and rolled it up into a round hardish lump, held it in both hands tightly, bent his head over it, and began rubbing across it, from side to side, the base of his very broad-backed and hooked nose. Great awe fell upon his subjects, big and little. The process described,—which they used to call, “sharpening his beak,” was one which, by experience, they well knew betokened the approach of some terrific catastrophe; while they were also very well aware that, during the sharpening of the beak, the two bluish grey eyes were scowling round, from one to another of them—as before remarked, under their proper brows, and over their proper spectacles.

The beak was sharpened. The pocket-handkerchief was unfolded from its sphere-like form, shaken, and put up. James Charles Buchmahon then produced before himself a horn snuff-box, of his own manufacture; tapped it often; gravely took off its lid; dipped deep his finger and thumb into its pungent contents; put on its lid; returned it into his waistcoat-pocket, sniffed up, in a long, long-drawn sniff, about half of the huge pinch he had abstracted from it, and then he uttered three words more.

“Master Edmund Fennell!”

The individual so summoned left his seat, and stood before the throne.

James Charles applied his spectacles close to Neddy’s face, deliberately and diligently scanning it, now upwards and downwards, now from side to side. With much suavity he then took him by the shoulder, and induced him to turn round and round, that he might critically inspect the evidences left upon his dress of his fall on the very dusty, old oak floor.

This investigation ended, a piercing “whew!”—which continued while his breath lasted, followed it; the “whew” was, by the way, usual on such occasions as the present, and it used to traverse the boys’ heads, as if a long needle

had been thrust into one ear, and out through the other. And then, after finishing the pinch of snuff, he politely addressed Neddy.

"Why, sir, you are quite a buffer—a perfect Mendoza. I had no conception whatsoever, sir, that my seminary had the honor of containing such an eminent pugilist. But, sir, any young gentleman, who aspires to become a bully, under this roof, must begin by fighting with me, and more than that—he must become my conqueror, before I can permit the English Academy to be turned into a bear-garden. But we shall speak of this, sir, when I shall have discharged a more pressing duty. In the mean time, Master Edmund Fennell, have the kindness to kneel down—a little apart, however, from those two prone animals," pointing to the two dirty fellows, who of course still continued on their hands and knees.

Neddy could have said something in his own defence, but he was either too proud or too much put out to do so; or perhaps he wisely reserved himself for the re-investigation of his case, which seemed to have been promised; so he knelt down.

A new fit of crying and sobbing was heard from the old table in the recess, and a beautiful little girl, her cheeks streaming tears, ran forward to the judgment-seat.

And—"Sir, sir," she exclaimed, clasping her little hands, "do not punish Ned Fennell—he doesn't deserve it!—he is a good little boy, and often comes to see my father, with old priest Connell—and my father says he is a good boy—and so does priest Connell;—and least of all does he deserve your anger, for what has happened this morning! I saw and heard it all, sir—and I can make you sure that he has done nothing wrong,—no—but done everything that was right, sir. Oh! good Mr. James Charles Buchmahon, do not take him into your room and hurt him!"

Neddy had not shed a tear before this moment; after an upward glance at his little advocate, he now cried heartily—but they were happy tears he shed. James Charles Buchmahon stood motionless—his large, cold eyes became half-covered by their upper lids. He smiled, in something like the kindness of human nature, and the boys thought, as well as they could judge through his spectacles, that a softening moisture came over them. At all events, he

quietly sat down, took the little girl by the hand, drew her to his knee, and began to question her in a low voice.

She informed him that Neddy's scuffle, in the first instance, with the two dirty fellows, arose out of his endeavoring to hinder them from approaching the girls' table with their atrocious book of fortunes. She repeated the words that had passed between Neddy and them; and how Neddy put the book into the pocket of his jacket, and then how they fell upon him, while he would not give up his prize, but defended himself as well as he was able. James Charles listened attentively, and questioned the child over again, and very minutely. When she had said all she could say, he bent his lips to her ear and whispered a few words. The little thing clapped her hands, dashed aside with them the tears and the golden hair at once, which were both blinding her, and her lovely little face was one glowing smile, as she whispered in her turn—"Oh! thank you, sir." But James Charles Buchmahon, becoming somewhat scandalized at so unaffected a show of feeling and of nature, raised his fore-finger and said, in almost one of his freezing tones—"Now go back to your seat, Miss M'Neary."

Little Helen, after making her little salaam, obeyed; but not before her smiling eyes and those of Neddy Fennell, now also smiling, had contrived to meet.

A death-like silence ensued—

"It was as if the general pulse
Of life stood still, and nature made a pause,
An awful pause, prophetic of her end!"

And during the "awful pause" James Charles Buchmahon, half inclining himself backwards, and holding his head perfectly erect, while his hands hung clenched by his sides, frowned downwards upon the two dirty fellows, in, as it were, speechless abhorrence and indignation.

At length he broke the pause by uttering, in tones that seemed to come from the depths of his laboring bosom:—

"Quadrupeds! become, for a moment, bipeds—imitate humanity by standing upright."

With the facility of dancing bears the quadrupeds did as they were bid.

"Quadrupeds! how many senses are there?"

"Five, sir!" they bawled out in a breath.

"You, quadruped, to my right hand, name those five senses."

"Feeling, hearing, seeing, tasting, and smelling, sir."

All this seemed very wide of the mark, and puzzled the dirty fellows, and the whole school besides, exceedingly.

"So far, so good. Well, then, none of my five senses ever yet perceived, so as to cause my reflective powers to apprehend, and thereby my understanding to arrive at the conclusion that the English Academy was founded and instituted by me, for the training up of any of the inferior animals—of any of the brute creation, in fact. I could not have possibly imagined that, at this time of my life, I was to degenerate into an instructor of beast brutes—ay, of the foulest among the foul brutes—of foul, snorting swine. But you have undeceived me. And allow me to ask you, how has it come to pass that you have been enabled to stand upright in your sty, and present yourself, upon two feet, at the threshold of the English Academy? By what 'mighty magic' has been wrought the presumptuous deception?"

The quadrupeds did not venture to answer the question.

"I say to you both that, in daring to stand erect on your hinder legs, you have attained the very climax of audacity. But—" here James Charles slowly took out of his desk the cat-o'-nine-tails—"but I will assert over you the outraged dignity of human nature. Great as may have been the spell which enabled you, for a season, to look like human beings, I can overmaster that spell by a higher one, and force you to resume your pristine positions on the earth. Down, therefore! Down again on all-fours—I command your re-transformation!" he waved the cat slowly round his head; "abandon the bearing of humanity, and once more move along with prone visages and snouts, delving into your native mire and filth."

The swine, as James Charles now called them, evidently did not comprehend this long harangue, and only glared at him with pallid visages.

"Did you not hear me, unclean brutes?"

"Yes sir," they gasped.

"Obey, then!"—a hissing of whipcord came round their ears, and then its crash descended on their bare heads.

They shouted, clapped their hands to their smarting craniums, and jumped aside. The cat next applied her claws to the backs of those hands; and there was a still louder yell, and a wider jump aside.

"We don't know what you want us to do, sir!" they screamed out.

But James Charles Buchmahon soon make them know; and again they were on their hands and knees.

"Grunt now, ye swine—manifest your nature a little further. Grunt!" he again elevated the cat.

They earnestly assured him they could not grunt.

"Can't? I will soon show all the young gentlemen here that I have not mistaken your nature or qualities—come, grunt, I say!" and the cat was scratching wherever she could insert a claw.

"Ugh, ugh—ugh, ugh—oh-ah!" they at last grunted and shouted together.

"Did I not judge aright, gentlemen of the English Academy—hark, how plainly they can speak their original language—walk forward, now, swine—but still, still on your four legs—do you hear? and grunt as ye go, that all human beings may avoid you."

Round and round the school-room he made them crawl, while, per force, they still imitated the discordant sounds of the animals they personified. In vain did they attempt to escape under desks or forms. With a smart cane, which he had now substituted for the cat, their merciless driver soon hunted them out again to the middle of the floor; and if they ceased their motion, for one instant, or refused to grunt, down came the cane on them.

At last, growing tired of his occupation, James Charles halted, and allowed them to do the same.

"So far, swine," he said, "you have been only enforced to resume your proper natures, and display your proper attributes. Real punishment for your crimes you have not yet received. Punishment, first, for your unnameable crimes at yonder table, and all your proceedings connected therewith; punishment, secondly, for your cowardly swinish crime of attacking together one little boy; one little human creature, certainly inferior to you in mere brute strength—and rending and disfiguring the comely human features that providence had blessed him with. I am still

your debtor, I admit. But please God, I shall not long be so."

Only waiting to imbibe a fresh pinch of snuff, as a kind of piquant stimulus to his already perfect good will for the task before him, James Charles then belabored the two dirty rascals, from the nape of the neck to the termination of the back-bone—allowing them, at last, to go halting and roaring to their places, only because his arm was no longer able to hit them hard enough.

Again returning to his desk, he again called out, "Master Edmund Fennell—" speaking still very loudly, though the boy was within a very few inches of him. Neddy arose, willingly enough.

"I, the more readily, and the more easily have been induced to remit the punishment due to your offence, sir, of repelling even by one single ungentlemanlike blow, the attack made, no matter how brutally, upon you, because your late re-entrance into the English Academy, after a long absence from it, since your good father's death—" Neddy burst out crying—"may have caused you to forget that I require from the youth of my establishment, not the turbulence of prize-fighters, but the habits of young gentlemen. Sir, there shall be no boxing-matches in the English Academy. If there be cause of quarrel, it must be immediately referred to me, and justice shall be dealt to both parties. Go now, Master Edmund Fennell, and return your respectful thanks to Miss Helen M'Neary, to whose generous interference, you stand chiefly indebted on this important occasion; go, sir—if indeed the young lady can bear to regard, even for an instant, the present very ungentlemanlike state of your features."

Neddy was instantly hastening, as fast as he could walk, his arms wide open, to obey this reasonable and pleasant request.

"Stop, sir," roared James Charles Buchmahon. This unexpected countermand sounded like a gun-shot in Neddy's ears, and he certainly did stop.

"Pray, sir, in what seminary did you acquire that uncouth and bruin-like method of paying your respects to a young lady? Retire some distance back, and make an obeisance to Miss M'Neary; thus, sir; look at me, sir, if you please."

Ned looked accordingly, and beheld James Charles Buchmahon advance his finger and thumb to the brim of his cream-colored beaver, keeping his elbow turned out, and his arm well rounded as he did so; and then he beheld him solemnly raise the beaver from his bald, grey head, sway it downward gradually and gracefully, and bent his body, until his head came on a line with his hips; and James Charles, during all this process, smiled and simpered his very best, and at last said, in a fascinating tone—"Miss Helen M'Neary, I return you my most sincere and respectful acknowledgments."—"Now, sir!" And James Charles again stood very straight, and holding his head very high, proud of the perfection of his politeness, while his eye took a short circuit round the school-room, to notice the universal admiration which his dignified gracefulness must have called forth. Neddy Fennell contrived to turn his face from the observation of his preceptor, while he performed the task prescribed to him; and then gave—repeating every syllable he had heard—so correct an imitation, in tone, manner, and action of James Charles Buchmahon, that the row of young ladies before him, and all the boys around him, were nearly suffocated with the attempt they made to suppress their laughter.

"That will do, sir: you may now retire to your place," added James Charles.

And Neddy did so; and afterwards took his own time and opportunity for returning, in his own way, to Miss Helen M'Neary, "his most sincere and respectful acknowledgments;" nor is it mentioned, that the little lady disliked this repetition of a display of his gratitude, or indeed, that she considered Neddy's way on the occasion, as very much inferior to James Charles Buchmahon's way. But this looks too like telling tales out of school.

CHAPTER XV.

BUT, notwithstanding all his peculiarities, the master of the English Academy was really a good and efficient master; and perhaps throughout all Ireland, at the time, there was not a better school of the kind than his.

In it were taught, and well taught, along with reading, writing, and arithmetic, history, geography, English grammar, English composition, and the first principles of a certain kind of metaphysics, borrowed, perhaps, by James Charles from his private reading of Locke and Harris, and arbitrarily interpreted by him in lectures to the boys of the head and second classes. And in all these branches of solid education, Ned Fennell, although an idle boy, soon made such progress as to become rather a favorite with his preceptor.

But it was in an additional branch—the ornamental one, namely, of declamation—Ned so excelled, in the estimation of James Charles Buchmahon, all his young rivals, that the pedagogue might be said to have grown, merely on that account, fond of the boy. For James Charles thought declamation a very fine thing himself, and imperturbably believed that he shone in it. And little Ned's close imitation of his master's conventual manner of "making points," in different dramatic scenes and passages, quite flattered the heart of James Charles Buchmahon.

Ned could repeat, for instance, "my name is Norval," to the iota of what his teacher regarded as the excellence of theatrical recitation; and when he came to the words, "round as my shield," not James Charles himself could more gallantly extend his left arm, and more expressively make the forefinger of his right hand revolve again, and again, and again, around an invisible shield, supposed to be buckled on the protruded limb. Again, in Richard's soliloquy on Bosworth field, when the tyrant says, "I'll try to sleep her into morn," Ned would pop, quite as naturally as his instructor ever did, on one knee, leaning his elbow on a form, and covering his face with his hand; and afterwards, when he started up, roaring out, "give me another horse—bind up my wounds," the shiver of both

his hands—not a tiny shake, that might not perhaps be distinctly understood—but a good, palpable, palsy motion, that at a glance you knew betokened mortal terror—was, after himself, perfection in James Charles's eyes. And when Neddy Fennell became transformed into Hotspur, and was describing the fop, he would so closely copy his master's "stage business," in the situation, that once or twice James Charles nearly applauded him in an indecorous manner. For after covering the palm of his left hand with its proper fingers, to imitate the "pouncet-box," he would tap the middle and third finger, by way of its lid, and then deliberately raising up these two, he would delve the finger and thumb of his right hand into the open space, and supply them with such a monstrous pinch of pouncet-powder, and then dispose of it in the cavities of his nose with such a solemn and intense relish, that surely no other individual, one excepted, ever gave so faithful a picture of nature's self. As to his personification of Will Boniface, in which he had to thrust out his little person in order to make a paunch, and keep one arm akimbo, and straddle and waddle in his walk, and speak down in his throat, and puff out his cheeks, and drink "his ale" from the fist of his disengaged hand, smacking his lips after each draught—in this character, James Charles almost admitted "a rival near the throne."

But the pleasure and admiration imparted by Ned Fennell's powers of declamation were not exclusively enjoyed by James Charles Buchmahon. When Neddy went through his different parts at home, that is under Father Connell's roof, the old man would look on at the serious sketches with great wonder; and during his protégé's enacting of such characters as Will Boniface, would move his head and his arms together up and down, and gently smite his knees with the palms of his hands, and laugh until he cried.

And when he took Neddy by the hand, and led him to dinner at Gaby M'Neary's, as was often the case—for as little Helen has hinted, the old priest, and the old priest-hater had become the greatest friends in the world—Ned, in the hours of recreation during the evening, had at least two additional admirers in old Gaby's house. Indeed, glancing back again homewards for a moment, Mick Demp-

sey and Mrs. Molloy occasionally formed another portion of his applauding audience, the latter exclaiming, very nearly in the words of Mrs. Quickly at the Boar's Head, "he does it as like one of those harloty players, as ever I see" (Mrs. Molloy had never seen one); and Tom Naddy would also be allowed to look on, although he was never known to show the slightest interest in the exhibition, no more than in any other exhibition or circumstance under the sun.

And along with all these things, it will be gratifying to have it known, that Father Connell continued to love, as much as he admired, his adopted son. He studied Neddy attentively and anxiously, but found nothing positively evil in him. He was a truth-loving boy, not a jot of meanness was in his nature, he was a grateful and an affectionate boy, and he regularly, and of his own accord, attended to all his religious duties; so that the old priest could not help loving him.

And yet, while he loved, he also feared for Neddy. The young lad's actions, though seldom blameful, too often sprang from impulse, when they should have resulted from principle. He dearly liked frolic and fun, and in his eagerness for either would, now and then, forget a duty. In choosing objects on which to exercise his practical jokes, he did not always distinguish between the fit and the unfit, between those persons who might afford to bear a boy's jest, and those whom the boy's sense of veneration ought to have spared from such an impertinence. And all this too Father Connell thought he saw. He did not see, however, how much of the contradiction of Neddy's character, at this time of his life, was caused by the stealthy and unsuspected influence, and the inscrutable humor of another person—namely, Tom Naddy, "the priest's boy." For instance—

"I want you to write a bit iv a letther for me, sir," said Tom to him one evening.

"Surely you can write it yourself, Tom."

"I couldn't write it out handsome enough, Masther Neddy; 'tis so long sense I done a thing ov the kind, my hand is out, somehow."

"Well then, Tom, I'll do it for you."

And without a single inquiry about the nature of the

epistle to be written, he hurried off Tom to the little osier arbor at the top of the priest's garden, and at that person's dictation he wrote as follows :—

"HONORABLE SIR,—I am a poor, distressed creature, with a wife and seven small children, and I can't get a stroke of work to do, and I come to crave your charity. While there is plenty of beef and mutton, and the best of bacon in your kitchen, to give you more than enough every day in the year, and while you have the good meat to throw away, I haven't a potato to give to my destitute family ; and while you have your cellar full of choice wine to drink into yourself, morning, noon, and night, I haven't one sup of sour milk to wet the lips of myself, my wife, or my children ; so God reward you, sir, and out of your plentiful store give a small charity to a poor forlorn soul."

"That'll do iligant," remarked Tom.

"And what are you going to do with it?" asked Ned.

"I'll tell you another time, sir ; an' I'll engage for the present that the poor, forlorn sowl will get a big charity on the head of it."

And Master Tom Naddy pocketed, and walked slowly off, with the document, after he had obtained Ned Fennell's solemn promise—a promise very unthinkingly given, for in fact Ned's head was full of something else—not to tell any living being, that he, Tom Naddy, had had anything to do with the fabrication of the said document.

Early the next day, as Father Connell sat in his little parlor, a very miserable, poor man, introduced by Mrs. Molloy, presented him with a letter.

The priest read it hastily over, fixing his eyes, once or twice on the face of its bearer. He then bestowed on it a more leisurely perusal ; and now the glances which he shot towards the surprised and fear-stricken poor claimant, were, for Father Connell, unusually vivacious. He next reflected for a moment ; and finally started up, seized the now recoiling suitor by the arm, and hurried him into the kitchen.

"Now, sir," he said, pointing to the almost bare walls, "where is the beef, and the mutton, and the bacon for me to feast upon, while you and your family are fasting at home?—show them to me!—where are they, I say?"

"Your Reverence, I—"

"Shame upon you, shame upon you, man, to belie me in such a manner."

"Sir—sir—"

"Shame upon you' if the Lord made you poor, he gave you no license to belie your priest; come along with me still!"

The astounded pauper found himself again forced forward, out of the kitchen. Father Connell placed him before the half-barrel of ale, which, without any kind of enclosure, to screen it from observation, stood, "under the stairs;" and causing him, forcing him indeed, to bend his neck and shoulders, he put him too half-way under the stairs, while he continued:—

"And there is my cellar for you—the only cellar I have; take out of it, if you please, a bottle of the choice wine, that I drink, morning, noon, and night; come, find it, I say—find it!—find me a bottle of the choice wine!"

"I don't see any kind of wine at all here, sir, I protest."

"Well then; come out of that, and stand before me."

The terrified man obeyed, crawling backward, like a crab.

"Your nature must be very uncharitable, good man, and very bold and daring too—to come into my house, and to my very face charge me with the sin of gluttony, and with the sin of intemperance; and you must also be a very great fool, to imagine that you could expect a benefaction from the man you calumniated. I am ashamed of you, my good man—I am, indeed, and I wonder at you; on my word I do."

In addition to his former consternation, no one could possibly look more astonished, than now did the person thus addressed. It was evident to him, that he was accused of some crime, but of what kind he could not for his soul conjecture. Why he had been half-dragged into the kitchen, and under the stairs, to look for beef, mutton, bacon, and choice wine, where none was to be found, seemed another mystery, inexplicable to the poor, stupified fellow; and the upshot of it was, that tears came into his eyes, and coursed through the wrinkles of his cheeks. He moved in silence to quit the presence of his offended priest.

But Father Connell had not bargained for this at all. In an instant his pious displeasure left him; pity, if not remorse, touched his heart, and he brushed a tear from his own old eyes as he called out—"stop, my good man."

The wretched being, somewhat reassured by the present kindness of the clergyman's tone, did so.

"I see you are sorry for your fault, and I forgive you; you are penitent—that's enough; what reconciles us to our God surely ought to make us friends with one another. But let me warn you against calumniating your neighbor in future: it is a grievous, grievous sin. Go home now to your family;" he took the man's hand, and while shaking it and squeezing it, deposited in his palm the few pieces of silver he could find in his pockets;—"go: I forgive you from my heart, distress makes us bitter and censorious; go, and may God bless you."

The poor man, now weeping plentifully, dropped on his knee to receive the blessing, and then hurried out of the house.

Throughout these occurrences, Tom Naddy had been peeping, now from one corner, now from another; and laughing—not audibly, but silently in all the cavities next to his heart.

Father Connell again sat down in his little parlor, and again took up and read the strange petition he had just received. In a few minutes he laid it down before him, with a sudden and very painful suspicion in his mind. It struck him now, for the first time, that he knew the handwriting. He examined it more closely, and conviction followed, and with it came a pang, perhaps the bitterest which, during his life, he had ever known, and he laid his forehead on his hands while it swayed him.

After some time he arose, his almost white eyebrows knitted and depressed, and Tom Naddy heard him walking very rapidly about the parlor. In a few minutes he folded up the paper, put it in his pocket, and left the house.

Proceeding to the residence, in a remote suburb street, of the person who had brought him the letter, Father Connell questioned the poor man about it. "Who wrote it for him?" He had never asked any one to write it. It had been brought to him by a young lad, of that lad's own accord, who assured him that if he presented it to Father Connell much good would thereby result to him and his family. "Had he since then read the letter, or got any one to do so for him?" No, the petitioner could not read writing himself, and didn't wish to be troublesome to any

one else on the subject. "Did he know the lad's name?" Yes, but he had pledged his solemn word not to reveal it to a human being; he would disclose it to Father Connell, however, if the clergyman wished. But Father Connell instantly demurred: no man, he said, could pretend to release another from the engagement of a solemn promise; and he returned to his house.

About this time of the day Ned Fennell was also moving homeward from the English Academy, capering and swinging his satchel round his head, and "as hungry as a hound," according to himself, for his dinner. Tom Naddy met him some distance from their abode.

"You won't forget that I have your word pledged to me, Masther Ned?" said Tom.

"I'll keep my word like a man, when it is pledged; but what have I pledged it about now? I quite forget."

"You pledged me your solemn word, that you'd never let it be known to any one in the wide world, that it was I put you on to writing the letter last night."

"Oh, ay, I have it now; it quite went out of my mind: so never fear; my word to you shall be kept."

They parted. Ned was soon knocking at Father Connell's door. Mrs. Molloy opened it to him. He took hold of both her hands and shook them violently.

"Will you never larn to be easy an' quiet, Masther Neddy?" she asked in words of reproof, while her very beard smiled in approval of the lad's greeting, which she cordially returned.

"I'll be as quiet as a lamb while I am eating my dinner, Mrs. Molloy: so walk in here and get it for me."

He tied his satchel to her apron-string, passed an arm through one of hers, and strutted at her side towards the house, looking up and grimacing into her face—all to the great delight of the good old lady, although she threatened to box his ears, "if he wouldn't be quiet, and lave her alone." The boy entered the little parlor with his usual salutation of respect, and his smile of real affection; but the cheery reply of "Welcome home, Neddy, my child," was not on this occasion accorded to him. The old man only nodded gravely, and motioned to him to become seated to the little table, on which his dinner was usually laid.

Poor Ned felt chilled, and, though he could not suspect why, terrified. His frugal meal was quickly placed before him by Mrs. Molloy, who gabbled something or other, to which neither the priest nor his protégé answered a word. It was over, and still perfect silence continued; and, notwithstanding the boy's late boast of ravenousness, he had scarcely eaten a mouthful. He now glanced towards Father Connell, and perceived that he sat with crossed knees and folded arms, and a very picture of old age sorrowing.

"Come hither, Neddy Fennell," said the clergyman at last. The boy stood to his knee.

"Neddy, I knew you were fond of a frolic, and thoughtless and giddy in pursuing it; but I passed this over, because I always was sure that your jokes came into your head, without a plan, and without an intention of doing harm to any one; and I said to myself, that riper years would make you more steady. But I was wrong in part of my judgment, Neddy Fennell. I now find out, and it gives me great trouble at my heart to know the fact, that you use fore-cast, and take your leisure to lay a plan, for the purpose of having your joke; yes, Neddy, and you can think, and call it sport to make laughter for yourself, out of the sorrows and sufferings of the poor, and to mock, and turn into a scoff, your best friend in this world, Neddy; and a very old man too, Neddy; a very old man, and your priest."

Neddy was vehemently beginning to utter something.

"Hush, child—do not add to your offences, by saying what is not the truth. I have often told you, that one lie puts us into the power of the father of lies."

"I have never told you a lie, sir; I never will tell you a lie, sir; but—"

"Do not interrupt me, Neddy. Do not merely promise me the truth; but answer me at present in the truth. Is that your handwriting?" he held the letter out to him. Having glanced over it, Neddy did not immediately answer. A vague thought of Tom Naddy's treachery began to break upon his mind. Father Connell sternly repeated his question.

"Yes, sir," he replied, in a very humble tone, "this was written by me."

"I thought so, Neddy ; indeed I was sure of it ; and yet, your own words make me sadder than ever."

The boy was about to explain, with flushed cheeks and flashing eyes, how he had been induced to write it, and of course by whom ; but a recollection of his solemn promise to Tom Naddy checked him, and when the old priest had uttered the last words, Neddy Fennell began crying bitterly. He saw that he could not escape from the most disgraceful of charges, and despair very nearly possessed him.

"Listen to me, child. I loved you. I loved you as a father ; as your father in the spirit, and for the sake of him who left us the new commandment—'love one another.'—And indeed, Neddy, I think—I fear—that—I loved you too well, in a mere human yearning of the heart also ; and that I am, therefore, now punished. 'Tis quite true, my child. Abraham never loved Isaac, and Isaac never loved Jacob, more than I loved you ; and Rachel weeping for her children, and refusing comfort, because they were not, never I believe, sorrowed over the loss of them more truly, than I now sorrow over your falling off."

Father Connell's broken voice, interrupted him ; and Neddy could now only go on crying until his grief became a passionate paroxysm.

"Well, Neddy, I see you are sorry for your crime—and that is something. But my duty towards you plainly tells me that you ought to suffer more. Your crime calls out for chastisement, my child—painful, bodily chastisement. I am commissioned to pluck up by the roots, this instant the vices that are beginning to sprout in your young heart ; lest that heart might become an unfeeling one in your manhood, and make you, when the grave covers me, a bold and careless scoffer of all that is holy in earthly misfortune, and, worse than that, in religion, Neddy."

The young lad flung himself upon his knees, and with clasped hands was beginning an appeal, though he still had resolved not to break his pledge to Tom Naddy.

"It is no use, child ; it is no use : stand up and walk on before me into the yard." The priest as yet could only think that he was petitioning against the infliction of the promised chastisement. Arrived in the yard, Father Connell commanded him to enter "the black hole," and not to

leave it till he should be brought out for further punishment. Ned obeyed in silence. This "black hole," was a small shed, built to one side of the little yard, and used as a storehouse for coals and other fuel. Father Connell hasped its door upon him; for it had no lock, and Ned heard his footsteps leaving the premises.

Not many minutes had elapsed, when the hasp was briskly unloosed, however, the door flung open, and the burly person of the housekeeper seen by Neddy supplying its place; that is, shutting out the light of day, almost as effectually as ever it had done.

"What mischief did you do now, you misfortunate sky-bow?" she hoarsely demanded.

There was no answer to the lady's question. She peered in. Her pet was sitting on a lump of coal, his hands covering his face; and she saw his breast heaving with sobs, while tears escaped over the backs of his hands. Mrs. Molloy had never seen him in such a mood before.

"Lord be good to me, sowl an' body, what's the matther with you, child?"

Still no answer.

"Will you spake to me, will you, you poor brat ov a boy? Will you, I say; is it crying you are for being put in here? For what reason would that make you cry? A'int I come to let you out?"

"I'm not crying for being put in here," at last sobbed Ned, "but I'm crying to think, that Father Connell would have it on his mind, that I could make sport of him, and of a poor starving man and his family; it's that I am crying for, Peggy."

"An' tell me, my lanna, what happened to make the priest think that wrong ov you?"

"No matter, Peggy; I can't tell you about it; he will tell you himself; I can't; that's all."

"Keep it all to yourself then, you obstinate little mule, what need I care?—Ned, agra, tell me what's the matther; sure I'll do my best to bring you over it? that's a good boy; tell me now."

"No, Peggy—I say again I can't."

"Well, bottle it up and smoke it. Tare-an'-ages! Make ducks an' drakes ov it, my honey!—Neddy, avourneen, what is it about, at all, at all?"

Ned only shook his head.

"You won't, won't you? I don't care an ould rush, whether you do or no, you scatther-brained scapegrace. Neddy, my darlin', won't you tell me?"

"If I could tell any one, I'd tell you, Peggy. But I made a solemn promise, that I wouldn't tell a living creature."

"Sup, an' make merry on your promise then, an' much good may it do you. Come out o' that, anyhow: here—come out, I bid you."

"Peggy, I won't leave this, until the priest comes back; I'll go through everything he bids me."

"Come out to me this moment!"

"I will not, Peggy."

"No? Och, och, isn't this a poor case? Do you want to torment the sowl an' body out o' me? Do you want to vex the very liver is in me? you cross-grained, bull-headed, bit ov a boy; I'll make you come out, or I'll know for what!"

She stooped, and was making a grasp at her favorite, when her well-starched cap encountered the claw of a rusty nail, at the top of the door-way, and by it was whisked off her head, while her disengaged grey locks tumbled about her face. But, she returned to the charge, and was dragging out Neddy perforce, when Father Connell's voice sounded deeply and authoritatively at her back:—

"Peggy, do not meddle with the boy."

"But I will meddle with the boy. Do you want to make a peel-garlic of the crature? Do you want to put him in his airy grave? Fie, for shame on your Reverence! There is'nt a lovin'er sowl, for yourself, an' myself, undher the livin' sun, this blessed minit."

"Come out at my bidding, Neddy Fennell," said the priest. Neddy obeyed at once.

Standing at Father Connell's back, appeared Mick Dempsey, master of the parish poor-school, clad as sprucely as ever, and his scarlet watch-ribbon streaking down his thigh, and behind him again stood Tom Naddy, his hands crippled into each other, his lips were fixed as if for whistling, although no such sound reached the by-standers. And did Ned's eyes deceive him? Was there no sorrow upon his features for the boy he had placed in sore trouble?

Ned looked at him again, and it was, he assured himself, an expression of gratified cunning solely, which played through the puckers around the whistler's mouth. And, oh, how his blood raged at this discovery--and what would he not have given to let fly his clenched fists, at that moment, into his old friend's face!

But Father Connell commanded him to walk before him into the parlor, Mick Dempsey and Tom Naddy following; and while Mrs. Molloy was still engaged forcing her stiff, stubborn hair under her reclaimed cap, and muttering to herself all the time, against the tyranny practiced on "her poor lovin' boy," the priest had locked the parlor door on the inside upon himself and his present party.

"Have you brought the birch with you, Mr. Dempsey?" he now solemnly inquired.

"I have so, sir, 'pon my word," placidly answered Mick, and he produced from under his coat a besom of select birch-twigs, almost large enough to sweep the floor of his own school-house—a process, by the way, which the said floor very often wanted.

"Neddy Fennel, prepare your person for the severe punishment I have promised you; strip, sir."

As if he would at once get through a very unpalatable duty, Neddy was immediately and rapidly at work, and very soon stood ready for execution.

"Here, Tom Naddy," continued the priest, "take Master Ned Fennel on your shoulders."

"Father Connell," said Ned, his tears now dried up, and his face calm though stern, "if you tell Mr. Dempsey to cut away every bit of flesh that is on me—"

"Oh, murther!" shrieked a hoarse voice, outside the door, "every bit ov the flesh that is on him!—let me in here, I say; let me in." No one took notice.

"If he cuts away till he's tired, sir, I'll not move an inch under his hand; but sir—I will not go on that fellow's back."

"Let me in, I bid ye, or I'll whip the cloak over my head, an' go to the bishop, an' tell on ye! Yis, an' I'll go to the mayor's office, an' tell on ye, let me in—let me in," and Mrs. Molloy kicked violently at the door.

"Neddy," rejoined Father Connell, "you have acknowl-

edged your crime, and why will you not take its punishment obediently?"

"I can't say why, sir—but twenty men, and twenty horses to drag me, would never put me on *his* back."

"Tom Naddy, you vagabone, if you lend a hand to hoist him, I'll make you sup sorrow the longest day you live!" again shouted the voice outside the door, while the former loud kicking continued.

"Well, Neddy, so far you shall be indulged; Mr. Dempsey, let him receive his reward, just as he stands; proceed, Mr. Dempsey."

"Mick Dempsey, you long gad!"—Mrs. Molloy now had her eye to the key-hole, and saw Mick put one leg in advance of the other, and slightly wave aloft, in his right hand, his formidable implement of torture.

"Mick Dempsey, I say, touch him if you dare; touch him with only a wet finger, an' salvation to my wicked sowl! but I'll—oh!—tare-an'-ages, look at that!"

While talking, she saw the little besom flourished in the air, while Mick Dempsey gave two or three short coughs—and then, crash it came, on a table near at hand.

"Dress now, Neddy, my child; ay, my good child."

Gazing in wonder, and by no means in displeasure, into the faces of those around him, Ned, though sorely puzzled at this termination of the affair, was not slow in attending to the priest's last command. Father Connell was smiling blandly; Mick Dempsey was also smiling, with the expression of some great hidden meaning, and even Tom Naddy was—trying to smile, but could not. The mischievous rascal had no machinery within him able to produce the effect.

"Come here to me now, my good child," Father Connell went on, extending his arm. Neddy sprang forward.

"Mick Dempsey," continued the old priest, in a loud tone of rejoicing, "isn't Neddy a good boy, after all?"

"He is to be sure," answered Mrs. Molloy, outside the door, "and whoever said he wasn't but your two sefs within there?—and maybe I'd be let in at last. Who knows but I might?" she continued, uttering a hoarse, hideous giggle.

"Let her in, Mick," said Father Connell; and accordingly the housekeeper entered upon the scene.

"He is, Mick—he is, Peggy—a very good boy. He has not, as I thought at first, made sport of a poor man's sorrow nor mocked his old priest; and he bore all I charged him with, and he stood ready for heavy punishment sooner than break a promise solemnly given. Yes, Neddy, I love you as well as ever I did, now; and I believe better, Neddy;" and he bent his head, and laid his cheek to the boy's cheek.

Ned slid down, kneeling, from his old friend's embrace, and clasped his arms round his knees, weeping for joy. And "I see you know all about the letter, sir," he said—"who told you, sir?"

"Tom Naddy met me in the bosheen, and told me every word about it; and that says a good deal for Tom Naddy; he wouldn't let a good boy suffer for his fault."—Ned hurried over to Tom, and held out his hand.

"Come here to me again, my child." He now whispered into Ned's ear, "I am so very much rejoiced to find you guiltless, that I do not intend to chastise Tom Naddy, as he deserves."

"Thank you from the heart, sir."

"No, I will not—I will not punish him; he erred greatly at first, but he behaved well, very well, afterwards. Peggy, listen to me," and he proceeded to recount for Peggy's satisfaction—for her approval, Peggy thought—the whole transaction, from beginning to end, during which she would often slap the palms of her hands together, and interrupt her master with such expressions as—"Didn't I tell you, *ma-ha-bouchal* he was!—that's the boy!—your sowl against a hundhred!" And when the story was finished she caught and jerked Neddy up into her arms, as if he had been an infant, hugged him, and incommoded his chin with her beard, while she was kissing him. As for Tom Naddy, she could only bring herself to notice him with her usual expression of "kiln-dried-brat."

"And now, Peggy," said Father Connell, in conclusion, "don't you think Neddy deserves a little mug of ale, that he may drink really out of a real mug, and not out of his own little fist, while he is playing Mr. Boniface for you? And don't you think Mick Dempsey deserves another mug of ale, because he gave your pet such a sound flogging? And Tom Naddy, too—won't you give him a draught in

the kitchen?"—Mrs. Molloy began to look sour, but at the next words brightened up again—"and take a good long one yourself with him? and I protest I think I'll have another mug myself; come, Peggy, stir yourself."

Peggy soon fulfilled her orders; and as the good ale was quaffed or sipped, Father Connell walked up and down the parlor, gently rubbing his hands, and still smiling; and almost as often as he passed his adopted son, he would stop a moment, lay his hand on his shoulder, or pass his fingers over his curly pate, and whisper, "God bless you, my child;" and then he would say something pleasant, at which every one laughed; and when Peggy came to the parlor door, he would tell her she was a faithless sentinel over a prisoner; and Peggy would tell him in return, that she didn't hire with him to be a jailor—and forewarn him that every time he put "her lovin' boy" into the black hole, she would let him out, at which every one, Father Connell included, would laugh heartily again; so that verily there was much jubilee and rejoicing, that evening, in the priest's parlor—ay, and in his kitchen too. The good man himself went to bed, with a feeling as if a mountain had just been pushed off his heart.

This is a fit place to mention, that notwithstanding Father Connell's utmost care, poor Mrs. Fennell and her aunt had now been many months dead.

CHAPTER XVI.

A good, long stride, in seven-league boots, over some years.

The corporate authorities of Father Connell's city, had, in common-council assembled, decreed and ordered, that, within the bounds of their jurisdiction, it should be summer, or the "summer half-year" from the month of March to the month of September, and that, in consequence, no lamps need be lighted during that time; in fact, that no lamps should be lighted. They had also come to a decision that, upon each and every night when the almanac

foretold ever so thin a gleam of moonshine, it was to be, to all intents and purposes, a moonlight night, over the whole space they governed, and hence, they again commanded, that even during their "winter half-year," when moonlight nights of this description occurred, the streets of their good city should not be indebted to human art for a single additional ray of illumination. That these orders in council for the regulation of the heavenly bodies were deduced from very nice scientific calculations, is not quite averred ; but that they suited, indifferently well, the peculiar economy of the little, crafty corporation, is positively asserted.

It is November. It is a November evening too ; the town clock has just struck seven. Furthermore, it is a moonlight night—in the almanac : that is, supposing the moon to be really "made of green cheese," no more than a segment of the edge of her crust can possibly be yet visible to her mistress the earth, and even of that mother earth, or at least as many of her children as dot the surface of the small locality we have now to do with, are unable to discern a glint, so heavy and substantial is the canopy of blue-black clouds, interfering between the satellite and her primary. But no matter for all that, the corporate sages of the city had decided that a moonlight night it was to be ; and so not a single one of their paltry, half-starved little lamps is winking itself asleep, through the thick, the almost material darkness.

And on this pleasant evening there is a low, fat, little, old man, leaning on his fat, little elbows and arms over the uncouth half-door of his shop, and by his low whistle, and his glances up and down the street, he does not seem at all inconvenienced by the state of the weather, or the want of lamp-light. He is the owner of a small tenement, with small windows in it, and yet those windows having sashes so heavy, that it was very difficult to raise them up, that is any of them that could at all be raised up. But in truth, the greater number of them had not been stirred for many years ; and the dust and dirt had not been brushed off them, one might suppose, since the first day of their construction ; and almost every little pane of glass in them had been so often pieced and patched, that it became eventually doubtful whether any of their original glazery

existed. And the little, fat old man's little shop had an inflation, called a bow-window, projecting into the pathway of the street, and so dingy, that the sharpest eye could not penetrate past its surface.

What in the world he did there, peeping over his half-door, and whistling confidential music to himself, no rational passer-by could, for the life of him, imagine. There was nothing in the clouds in any wise attractive; neither moon, nor stars, nor Aurora Borealis, nor a comet, not even color, nor motion, nor change, nor variety of any kind, nor even a promise of it all night long. The milliner's shop opposite to him was shut up, so that he could see no finery in its windows, no fine people within itself; nay, he couldn't read, through the dense gloom, even the milliner's name upon her signboard across the street. The cloth-shop next to the milliner's at one side was also closed; the grocer's at its other side had very, very little custom. To be sure a few people, forced from their firesides by some grievous necessity, on such a chilly and doleful evening, now and then passed him, plashing through the little water-pools, or sliding over, or else sticking in the glutinous puddle of the streets; but if these visions interested him, he could enjoy them but for a few seconds at a time, as they quickly vanished at his either hand, into the wide open "jaws of darkness."

So no one could possibly tell what he was doing, and now for nearly two hours had been doing, in his own mind, as he leaned over his little half-door, emitting his almost inaudible little whistle, and rolling his heavy fat eyes in every direction. Could he tell himself? Indeed he could not.

A soft, lumpish, invisible substance, suddenly smote him on the cheek. He started, shuddered, said some prayers, but did not otherwise change his attitude. A second time, he was hit on the other cheek, in the same way, and a second time he only did what he had done before. A third, and a fourth time, a fifth and a sixth time, nay, a twentieth time, the mysterious assaults were repeated; and yet, though evidently suffering great fear and terror, he would only pray the more volubly without flinching a step from his unlucky position. And could he now tell you what was the matter? He was very sure he could. He

was suffering under some deserved chastisement, from the "good people." They were fairy blows he felt, he would solemnly assure you.

"A-rodge, a-rodge, come out o' that, a-rodge," exclaimed an almost naked, full limbed, gigantic figure, close to him, without head-covering, bare-footed, and bare-legged : the voice that spoke was half discordant, half mirthful, and the speaker, or rather gibberer, bent his large face close to our friend's and grimaced idiotically at him. He held one of the skirts of the indescribable clothing round his loins tucked over his left arm, and in the skirt was some oatmeal, and he would constantly dart his right hand among the provender, snatch up some of it, and dash it towards his mouth ; but he as often hit with it different parts of his countenance as he succeeded in lodging any of it within the receptacle for which it was intended ; and this constant powdering of his features gave a very ghastly expression to them.

"A-rodge, a-rodge, come out o' that, a-rodge."

"Is that you, Mickie?" placidly questioned the little, fat man, as he immediately obeyed the command, to "come out o' that," by at last altering his attitude, and opening his half-door.

The monster bent himself half double, and galloped into the little dingy shop, a fourth part lighted by the very smallest taper, and through it into the interior of the house.

"You've got nothin', ye beggin' '*budgy*,'" was the next salutation which the little shopkeeper received from a thin, sharp-featured man, whose eye was like that of a vicious, half-intelligent pig, and so small that his very large nose, high cheek-bones and beetling eye-brows, nearly hid it. He was inveterately yellow. He wore a suit of rusty black, begrimed and tattered ; his black locks hung in matted cords about his cheeks and shoulders ; and he carried under his arm something rolled up in a shoemaker's leathern apron.

"Here, George, here," was the only answer of the person addressed, as he again undid his hatchway.

George entered, but did not race off as Mickie had done ; he paused in the shop.

"You've got nothin', I say, nor none of your cursed

breed?" he again questioned, as he blinked his eyes, with spiteful eagerness, at the little, old, fat man.

"No, George, no."

"There's no demand, you beggin' *bochach*?"

"No demand, George, none."

"There's no demand on the man with the pepper-and-salt coat?"

"No demand, in life, George," and George's friend was closing his half-door, when the caustic idiot ran hastily to him, seized him by both his arms, and while his sharp features took nearly a crying expression, shook him violently.

"By HERN I'd run you through, you beggin' thief! We're free, we're free—free of the city—there is no one dare confine us, or shut doors on us—I'd run you through; or any o' your cursed breed. We're free, I say?" he held his fore-finger close to the shopkeeper's eye, as if about to dart it full into the orb.

"Oh; yes, you're free, George; there's no doubt of it."

"No doors to be shut on us?"

"No, no, George."

"Ho! ho! ho! yellow George! yellow George!" was screamed over the half-door, by a low-sized, disjointed looking fellow, with a round face deeply pitted from the small-pox, one of his eyes, a sightless mass, projecting from its lids; and the other, as well as the rest of his features, expressive, notwithstanding his frequent laughter, of much idiotic ferocity. He was clothed in a cast-off suit, much too large for him: his shoes were particularly so. He bent his face constantly towards the ground. His arms were very long, and he moved by occasionally hopping on his right leg, and then jerking forward the other side of his person.

"Go 'long, ye blackamoors, breed that lived on horser' flesh," cried George, running towards him, in return for his salutation.

"Yellow George, the fool!" shouted Paddy Moran, avoiding the rencontre, and slinging himself forward in the same direction which Mickle had taken.

"I say, Budgy Donally, we're free, and there's no demand?" reiterated yellow George.

"Oh! no, George, no."

"Well, we'll recompense you for that. I'll put you in my uncle's, the alderman's house; an' I'll throw you fish an' a bag of bran," was George's promise—one often made, by the way, as he followed his two predecessors.

Budgy Donally, as George had called him, resumed his place at the half-door, and he had scarcely fixed himself in his old position when a repetition of the fairy blows (they certainly were inflicted by some unseen agency) occurred; and again he started, half shouted in terror, and rapidly muttered his prayers, but still he would not wince under the infliction, nor even turn away his head from it.

"A poor boy that's burned wid the frost," whiningly appealed a fresh visitant, a man clothed in shreds and patches, and different portions of his attire kept on him by the aid of small hay-ropes. As he announced himself, he leaned lazily on a long, thick wattle.

As on the former occasion, the little half-door quickly opened to him; and as he, too, very leisurely plodded his way into the inside of the house—he continued his egotistical account of himself.

"My fut is complainin' agin the road, an' my bones is grumblin' agin the weather; an' I can't stop anywhere at all—an' I'm always goin' about over an' hether—an' I don't see any business I have goin' about anywhere—no, no more business nor a starved bee in a fallow-field." And at these words his voice died away in the distance.

"They're purshuin' me over an' hether, an' here an' there, an' through the bogs, an' across the hills, an' over the river, an' into the thick woods—they're purshuin' me ever an' ever."

These words were volubly uttered by a new-comer. He was a middle-sized, and more than middle-aged person, wearing a battered and broken straw hat, of which the very wide brim flapped far down his face; a flaming old plush scarlet-colored waistcoat, hanging half off his person, in ribbons; a small-clothes to match; a tattered soldier's coat, of the bygone taste, when long, full skirts, and abundance of tape flourishing over cuffs, lapels, and collar, were excellent military fashion. Stockings he had none; and when he moved, his brogues slipped up and down.

Once more the hatchway unclosed, and this gentleman entered, and also passed away through the shop, walking

very hastily, bending his head and eyes downwards, and still declaring, how much and how deviously he was "purshoo'd."

And there was yet another visitor; one clad coarsely, but not in tatters or patches; for his dress—although very old, appeared to have been kept together with the greatest diligence of needle and thread, and seemed the relic of former respectability; his pale, spare face, was solemn and serious, as if his mind were always absorbed in deep calculation; and he entered with his arms closely folded across his breast.

He did not greet our hospitable friend, as ingress was afforded to him; but was silently pacing after the other visitors, when the little proprietor of the house addressed him.

"Three barrels, seventeen stones, at two-pence farthing half-farthing a stone?" the man stopped suddenly, looked straight before him only for a few seconds, compressing his lips into a mere line, and then answered, "fifteen and two-pence half-penny," and onward he pursued his way.

The last arrival on this particular evening was a creature of very low stature, having a soldier's stock under his neck, a boy's jacket on his body, and such a mass of rags tied with twine round his nether limbs, that he was obliged to labor hard whenever he chose to put them in motion.

This curiosity made many hideous grimaces and gesticulations to the door-keeper, who, for the last time opening the hatchway, and pointing inwards allowed the deaf and dumb fool to pass out of his shop.

He was scarcely gone, when a tall, well-limbed, and very handsome youth, vaulted over the half-door and stood, half laughing, before our benevolent friend.

"Ah, Ned, I'm glad you're come back; go behind the counter now, and look over the day's accounts." The lad cheerfully obeyed, his master following him.

"What red spots are those on your cheeks, sir?" questioned Ned, before they engaged in their task.

"Oh! Ned, what would they be but fairy blows? for two long hours and more that I was looking over the door, the 'good people' never stopped striking me—just like as if big bulletts were hitting me all over the face and shoulders—look, Ned—here's the way they went on at me—"

He shut his little plump fist, protruded the knuckle of its middle finger, and as a practical illustration of how the fairy blows had been inflicted, began to punch away at his apprentice as fast as he could with that particular knuckle.

"Hugh, hugh, hugh—here's the way they went at me—" accompanying every punch with a "hugh;" and he did punch so quickly and so resolutely into Ned's face and forehead, that the latter was obliged laughingly to cry out for quarter.

"Oh, sir, that's enough: I now comprehend right well how they went on at you;" and he endeavored to avoid what natural philosophers would call a demonstration by experiment. But his master, suddenly seizing him by the collar with his disengaged hand, continued to punch on, until he lost his breath from the real fatigue of his occupation.

And a light here begins to break in upon us. Notwithstanding the arbitrary title conferred on him by yellow George, the little personage before us was indeed no other than Nick M'Grath—poor Atty Fennell's "buffalo-man," who exhibited some of the manners of that animal at the *Charitable Society*, upon the evening when, most fatally for himself, Atty presided over the assembly.

"Yes, that's the pay they went on at me, Ned," he resumed at last, getting quiet from mere lack of breath and strength.

"And on my word, they must have smarted you pretty well, sir."

"Oh! I'm black and blue from them, Ned."

"And no wonder, sir, if they worked so hard," and he rubbed his own face over and over with his extended hand, "but why didn't you go away from the door, and so escape?"

"No, no, Ned, no: 'tis always the best to let the 'good people' have their own way; if you thry to stop 'em they'll wither you up some time or other, 'tis the right plan not to stir hand or foot agin them; and whenever they come across you, Ned, take care not to vex 'em by doing anything else."

"I'll be as civil as smooth water to them, sir."

"Do, Ned, do, or the Heavens only knows what might happen;" and with this business-like advice, Nick M'Grath

retired to his little "parlor, kitchen, and all," to warm himself, take his glass of punch, sweetened with molasses from his own little oil and color shop; and when that had been imbibed, to say his prayers preparatory to going to bed, with his back to the fire.

CHAPTER XVII.

NED, left in the shop to regulate the day's accounts, see that his cash was all right, and everything in order, could not help soliloquizing—

"And on my word, Master Neddy, you richly deserve, after all, the knuckling you have just got;—'twas something like what is called, in fine English, retributive justice; what a simple, poor man!—We well knew he would lay all the blame to the fairies, and never suppose that his own hopeful apprentice, and one or two scapegraces like him, were his tormentors; kind-hearted little creature! 'tis a pity to play tricks on you—and yet you tempt a body to it."

In fact, the fairy blows had been given by soft clay balls, impelled through an old gun-barrel, a sport at which Ned and his friends alluded to, took great delight, and in which they had, from constant practice, become excellent marksmen; an assertion that recent evidence will doubtless render very credible.

He was busily engaged finishing his day's tot, his face bent intently towards his account-book, when a low gentle voice murmured very near to him: "Masther Neddy Fennell."

He suddenly looked up. A tall female, enveloped in the usual dark blue cloak, stood immediately opposite to him, on the other side of the counter. One hand and arm of this figure, quite bare, were visible outside the cloak, in order that its wearer might hold its hood closely gathered over her face; and no arm could be rounder, and more beautifully proportioned than was that one; while the hand, though red, was small, plump, and with tapering fingers.

They both hinted, moreover, that their owner must be a very young girl.

"Well, n y dear?" questioned Ned.

"I have some words to spake to you, young man," answered a sad, musical voice, still in a very low tone, and indeed only half heard within the folds of the impervious hood.

"Out with them, my pet; and let a body see your face, won't you?"

He moved his hand towards the hood.

The person stepped back out of his reach.

"That's not the way to make me tell you anything, sir," she said.

"Why so? You say you want to speak with me, and yet won't let me see your face? Come, come, my dear, I can carry on no such mysterious conversation in an honest man's house; that face I must see, or—" he was about to vault across the counter, when an earnestly whispered caution stopped him.

"Hould yer hand, young man! I will let you see my face an' welcome; but not here, nor at the present time. It might be a sore thing for both of us, if I let go the hood of my cloak in this place. I have words to spake with you, I say over again, ay, and there's as much as life an' death in them words; but I won't spake them to you now, no more than I will let you see my face now."

"Life and death, good girl! Pooh! you must be a fool, whatever kind of a face you have on you. What do you mean?" He was again putting himself in motion; she went on rapidly in sharp whispers.

"For the Lord's sake, don't come next or nigh me!" Her head hastily turned in the direction of the half-door. "Och, och! there is eyes upon me! I see one abroad, dark as it is, watchin' me close! don't stir, I bid you—nor speak a word to me—nor seem to take notice o' me at all—but listen, listen! I'm in possession of a knowledge that consarns your life—an' I am here, at the risk of my own life, to thry an' save yours—so meet me this very night, an' as soon as you can, for both our sakes. You know Joan Flaherty's house in the *grush** o' houses on Gallows Green—meet me there, an' be sure you take a roundabout an' a

* A scattered handful of anything.

crooked road to it, that no livin' sowl may guess you'll be on the road to it. Meet me in Joan Flaherty's house, I say, an' it's there I'll tell you my words—an' it's there I'll take the hood from my face too, for I don't want to hide the face from you; och, no! nor the heart neither—now God be wid you—an' for this wide world's wealth don't fail me!"

Before Ned Fennell could reply, she had bounded like a fawn into the street. He now really vaulted across the counter, and, with as much agility as herself, followed her. But the almanac moonlight, out of doors, completely baffled his attempts to catch a glimpse of her in any direction; and a moment's thought curbed his fleet foot, in its instinctive start—like the pawing of a spirited horse, eager for his journey—to race after the unknown visitor. A wholesome recollection of duties to be yet gone through at home, also helped to keep him for the present quiet.

So he returned into the dingy little shop, quite finished his accounts, and then fell to barring, bolting, and locking, for the night.

"You're done there, Ned, my good boy, ain't you?" questioned his master's kind, little, cracked voice, from his unseen back-parlor.

"Quite, sir," answered Ned, as he shot the last bolt.

"Come in here then, and take a lantern, and go and count the fools."

Ned obeyed. "Counting the fools," was one of his nightly occupations, to be attended to as strictly as any other of his responsibilities.

To the rear of the small house was a small yard, and to one side of this yard was a hayloft, gained by a step-ladder; other buildings around it, serving as store-houses, for the large stock of oil, pitch, tar, turpentine, and other combustible materials, having to do with Nick M'Grath's thriving business, as an oil and color merchant. In the hay-loft all the wandering and houseless fools, idiots, and deranged persons, whom we have seen enter the little man's shop, were now beginning to nestle down until morning, and Nick M'Grath, for a particular purpose, though a usual one, wished to ascertain distinctly of how many such lodgers he could call himself the host and landlord.

Ned Fennell accordingly stepped in among them. With

all of them, except one, he had previously been well acquainted—this one, however, had been but twice in the caravansary; and was the individual who complained so much, and so ceaselessly of being “purshoo’d.” As Ned now passed through the assembly of miserable beings, addressing or replying to them, each in his own dialect, he was much struck with the quantity of witless words, strung together by the new-comer; and once, as the man glanced up at him, from under the broad, flapping brim of his old straw hat, Ned’s mind suddenly started, as it were, and a most disagreeable feeling came over him, which he could neither account for nor define. It was, however, a true feeling, although not warranted by any process of ratiocination—well grounded instinct, far beyond, at that moment, all the pretensions of reason.

“Seven of them to-night, sir,” said Ned to his master, as he returned from the inspection.

“All the betther, Ned, the more the betther; the more fools in the house, the more luck to the house—here, Nelly Breehan—bring the bread and the milk; seven half-loaves in the basket, and seven pints of milk in the can. There’s seven of them to-night, Nelly—so, get their supper quick.”

Nelly Breehan soon obeyed her master’s orders; and Nick M’Grath, having put on his exceedingly low-crowned hat over his brown scratch wig, and after having buttoned up to his chin the snuff-colored surtout, which reached from that chin to his very heels, took the lantern in his hand, and went, followed by Ned with the provisions, up and into the hay-loft.

Its tenants were quickly astir. The gigantic, half-naked figure, who had first entered the house, was now also the first person to scramble for his supper. He had quite burrowed into the hay, and came galloping forward on all-fours.

“A-rodge, a-rodge,” he bellowed out—“give me—give—give—” and he snatched half a loaf, made a nearly successful grasp at another, and then fiercely attacked the milk-can, the contents of which he would most likely have dashed about the loft, had not yellow George, the caustic idiot, charged forward to the rescue.

“Go-long, you *omadhawn*,” he said, approaching the point of his fore-finger to Mickle’s very eyelashes, while

his red, little eyes glowed—"I'll run you through, you beggin' *bochach*—by the vartue of our oath, I'll run you through, you big nothin'!"

His fierce glance, and terrible threat, seemed to produce an instantaneous effect on the ravenous giant, who, twisting round still on all-fours, and crying out—"oh ah! oh ah! a-rodge, a-rodge—oh! ah! oh!" darted back into his den of hay.

"There's no demand, Budgy Donally?" George then inquired, ere he would receive his own proffered portion of supper—meaning thereby, that he was under no obligation for the food—and it may be noticed here, by the way, that poor George used to give a new name, out of his own head, to every person of his acquaintance, the moment such per-

his eye, and never afterwards did he forget cease to apply it to its object. Heaven only at partial remembrances of former association his estimation, the fitness of the name to perhaps—for George had not always been a inexplicable confounding of two individuals of them seen and known in bygone days; indeed it would be but waste of time to try or a solution of the puzzle.

demand, Budgy Donally?"

, George," answered Nick M'Grath.

demand, Beaeguard?" addressing Ned F'en-

ve a demand, George—" George sprang at

ou beggar—you lie; we'll give cakes and y vartue o' my oath we'll throw you cakes are's no demand on the provisions, Beau-

George, all free."

you cakes an' wine—an' I'll get you the mess it, Beaeguard—an' I'll fix you in my uncle's Donally, where you'll have lashens galore—"

and George sat down on the hay, to munch his bread, and sip his milk decorously.

"Here, take this, poor boy," said Nick M'Grath to the suffering youth who had been "burned wid the frost."

"I don't see what it is that brings me here, poor boy like

me, that's entirely burned wid the frost: I don't see that I'm of any use to anybody, no more nor a bit of wet brown paper; no by the good troth—" thus he whined as he accepted his supper; and then he retired with it into a corner and there went on rocking his body to and fro, for every bit and sup he took.

" 'A dhrop o' the crathur will make us glad;
Too much o' the crathur will make us mad;
But father an' mother,
And sister an' brother,
Will all take a dhrop in their turn.' "

"An' that's a good song, I believe," cried Paddy Moran, after he had finished his melody—his voice, whether he sang poetry or spoke prose, sounding as if it came bubbling through jelly. And then he took up another stray verse—

" 'Och! mavrone that ever I married!
It laves me here to sigh an' to moan,
Weepin' an' wailin', an' rockin' the cradle,
An' plaisin' a child that is none o' my own.' "

"And that's a bit of another good song, I'm thinkin'," and Paddy jerked his head from shoulder to shoulder, attentively addressing his finger-nails, as if they were the judges to decide whether his songs were good or bad; and then he began what he called a dance, wheeling round and round, or jumping upwards on one spot as fast as he could, like a dancing dervise.

Dick, the calculating fool, took his supper with the most impressive gravity, having first shaken hands in silence with his two helpers. The deaf and dumb idiot distorted his face into very villanous expressions of glee, as he accepted his; and the new-comer jabbered away on the topic on his being hunted and "purshoo'd" everywhere he went.

Paddy Moran, who had sung and danced, according to his usual mode, an application for relief, now also accepted his rations, but only passed them from one of his hands to another without tasting them. He had supped before, and had now no wish for food; and whenever such was the case, Paddy would either give away or throw away the victuals which his stomach did not for the moment require.

So he jerked himself about the loft, as if considering what was to be done with his own share of bread and milk.

As he passed the lair of the ever ravenous Mickle, that poor human beast thrust his head upward through the hay, and glaring intensely, though harmlessly, at Paddy, exclaimed—

“Murther, a-rodge! give, give!”

“Here, then, ate!—ate this very minute or I’ll murther you—ate, I bid you!” answered Paddy Moran; “ate an’ dhrink—ate an’ dhrink.”

He began tearing, as fast as he could, the loaf into by no means little bits. The mouth of the huge head gaped, and was instantly ready for them. Paddy thrust three or four pieces, one after another, into the cavity, and then, raising his noggin of milk as high in the air as he could, poured the liquid upon them, fiercely threatening all the while that if Mickle did not “ate, ate,” and “dhrink, dhrink,” as quickly as was humanly possible, he would inflict upon him some grievous bodily harm; and Mickle, evidently frightened, obeyed him as well as he could.

Yellow George, having now disposed of his evening meal, walked about the loft, his arms folded, and something approaching to an unnatural smile round his mouth, while his little piggyish eyes twinkled with insane sharpness of meaning.

“That was a great race you rode at the Corragh, Square Reeves,” he said, addressing “the boy that was burned wid the frost;” “by the vartue of my oath it was a great race you rode—the day that you had the tassals to your cap, an’ the pay-green jacket, an’ the doeskin on.”

“In throth,” answered Square Reeves, “I do go moping along, an’ I never know where I’m goin’ at all—I do be goin’ along, along like an owl of a sunny day, an’ I do be knockin’ myself agin this thing an’ that thing—an’ no more good in me than there’s in a hen on the wather.”

“I gie ye my oath, Beaeguard,” resumed Yellow George, addressing Ned Fennell, “I gie ye my oath, I seen noine hundred an’ nointy-noine like you, cut down by the man with the pepper-and-salt coat at Jack Archer’s.”

“Faith, and the man with the pepper-and-salt coat wasn’t idle, George.”

“It was the time my uncle an’ myself was over with the Prince o’ Wales—the time we were clarkin’ for him.”

"O, I know, George; the time the Prince o' Wales had you and your uncle whipped for thieving."

"You lie, you Roman vagabon', there's none of the breed that come up on our floor to be called a thief—I'll run you through by Herins, you *bochach*."

"There's no where I go but they're purshooin' me, up an' down, an' backard and forard; an' goin' wid the wind or agin the wind, they're always an' ever a purshooin' o' me," gabbled the new come fool.

George turned round and twinkled his red eye at the fellow, scanned him closely, and to hint the insignificance of the person he inspected, said: "Twould be hard to strip a breeches off of a bare thigh."

He then suddenly seemed struck at something very interesting in this man; he poked out his chin, and twinkled his eyes at him more quickly than ever, and extended his mouth from corner to corner, almost across his face, while he added:—

"Hah! it was a bitther cowl'd day the first day you were hanged, Johnny Rafferty."

Ned Fennell now also fixed his eyes on the fool, though he could not yet arrive at any distinct conclusion about him; in fact, George's new name for him threw our friend Ned much off his guard, to say nothing of the downcast face being still quite hidden by the old straw hat.

"An' the Prince o' Wales," continued George, "sent my uncle an' myself to find out how you made your escape from the second hangin', Johnny, an' we found out that it was the devil carried you off, Johnny Rafferty—the Romans is sure of heaven, Beauguard—we only thry—by the vartue o' my oath, one Protestan' is as strong as three Romans; bad time with the wavers, Budgy Donally, all broth an' no mate."

At this moment, by judicious manœuvring around George's Johnny Rafferty, Ned Fennell became positive that he saw before him the detested Robin Costigan. His first impulse was to pounce on the villian, even for whose cruelty to the little girl, Mary Cooney, still well remembered, Ned felt towards him the greatest indignation and loathing; but another identification of another person now suddenly took place in his mind: he believed that the girl who had made an appointment with him for that evening

in Joan Maherty's cabin, among the shower of houses, was no other than that very Mary Cooney; and his passionate inclination to knock Costigan down, and bind him, and drag him to gaol, was replaced by a great anxiety to speak with the beggar girl, and by a resolve not to take any decided step against her atrocious tyrant until after he should have done so. He did not indeed reason himself into this determination, nor could he pretend to himself that it was a wise thing, after all, to leave the old robber and gaol-breaker free under his master's roof, even for the shortest possible space of time. A great wish to keep his appointment, chiefly indeed, if not wholly and solely, shaped Ned's conduct. At all events, assuming as much unconsciousness as he could, of the fearful discovery he had just made, Ned Fennell rather hurriedly convoyed Nick M'Grath down the step ladder of the hay-loft, and then, unobserved by the old man, but not by Nelly Breehan, his housekeeper, raced at good speed towards Gallow's Green.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Is there any unfit feeling in the hurry I am in to meet this young girl?" questioned Ned Fennell of himself, as he approached the shower of houses. His boyish acquaintanceship long ago, with poor little Mary Cooney, her gratitude for his school-boy chivalrous protection, and for his scrap of bread and sip of milk; the loveliness of her features and person, even at that time: her parting from him, and the earnest kiss which accompanied it; all this came to his recollection, and as he proposed to his own heart the query just recorded, he suddenly stopped a few minutes in his speed, to follow up the inward investigation.

Did he seek, in maturer years, to take advantage of Mary's early interest for him, and which, from some part of her conversation in Nick M'Grath's shop, as well as from the soft tones of her voice, he told himself still remained unabated? Should the untaught and primitive creature, in her approaching interview with him, unwittingly

tingly and sinlessly overstep any of the bounds of feminine reserve and self-protection, would he countenance her mistake? "No!" He stamped his foot smartly on the ground. "No, Helen!" was his heart's answer, addressed to the young lady whose name he mentioned, just as if she herself had been present, and had tartly catechised him on the subject. "No, Helen: my love for you charms me like a spell, against even a thought of harm towards poor Mary Cooney; or, even if it did not, even if I loved you not—I hope—oh, I do firmly hope and trust, that—wild as many people call me—I should still be able to act as I ought to act, for poor Mary's own sake, and out of love and fear of my God first of all; no, no, I thank Him, I have not yet learned to "laugh at my catechism, so come along then, Master Neddy!"

His foot scarcely touched the threshold of Joan Flaherty's house, when the trebly patched door of the hotel was suddenly, though cautiously pulled open on the inside, and a tall, slight girl closely confronted him, in the almost perfect darkness at that end of her apartment.

"Your name, good girl?" whispered the visitor.

"Och! what 'ud it be bud Mary Cooney," she whispered in her turn.

"I thought so; poor child! poor girl! and how have you been these many, many years?"

He extended his hand. She took it in hers, trembling all over.

"Before I say anything else to you, I bid God bless you; an' be good to you, sir—for I see you're still as tenther-hearted, an' as pityin' to me as when you were the little *gorsoon* that shared his own bit an' sup wid the poor, shoolin' little girl, an' pelted down Darby Cooney for her—och! och! an' it's often an' often I thought about you sence that time; Darby Cooney's stick was never over me—an' och, sure that was every day—that I did not say to myself, if the beautiful an' the tenther-hearted little boy was here, he'd help the lone orphan."

"And you never said a truer word in your life, Mary; but tell me, do you still live with that old scoundrel?"

"Och, an' sure I do—how can I help it? It's sore agin my nature an' my thoughts, an' my wishes, but how can I help it? I wouldn't be next or nigh him if I *could* help it;

no in good troth I wouldn't; an' that I may be delivered safe out of his hands, is my prayer, mornin', noon, an' night—come this way, an' I'll tell you."

Continuing to hold Ned's hand, she led him to the fire at the further end of the cabin; lighted a greased rush, and stuck it in some damp yellow clay against the wall, placed the only seat in the establishment, a rickety, three-legged stool, in front of the fire; made him sit down on it, and then chose her own place on the floor, sitting close to Edmund's knee.

"But surely, my poor girl, you are now old enough, and grown enough to do something for yourself, and now, at least, you ought to separate from the old robber?"

"Och hone, och hone, where could I go? an' who'd hould the arm over me, to save me from Darby Cooney? Och, he'd find me wherever I'd go; an' he'd murther me, murther me!"

She inclined her head to Ned's knee; he saw that her tears were flowing fast.

"Darby Cooney," she continued whispering, "Darby Cooney is wicked nor ever he was; an', not to spake of him at all, there's another hand over me now, a'most as heavy as his own hand. An' the poor little child! Do you remember the poor little babby I had on my knees, the morning you came in to me, on this very flure—on this very spot, to share your little breakfast wid me?"

"I do indeed remember the wretched creature."

"Well. That little babby died in my arms; och hone, och hone, I cried my plenty o' the salt tears over the little corpse; for that little babby used to thry an' hide itself in my bosom, when Darby Cooney would roar at it; an' I was o' the mind that it had the love for me, an' the love for it was in my own heart, surely; och, I cried bitther over it—good troth, I did."

She became more agitated, but went on.

"The little babby died, an' sore did I miss it. I was now left alone entirely, entirely, with Darby Cooney, an' no livin' thing to care for me; and och it was then I used to bring to mind, over an' over, that the little babby an' yourself were the only two cratures that ever had the love for me. Yis—there was a poor little doggy, that used to go about wid us on our thravels; an' it would lie at my

feet, to warm 'em in the cowl'd nights, and lick them an' my hands all over, and stand forenent me, on the road, an' wag its tail, an' look up into my eyes; an' I thought that poor brute crature had a liking for me too—an' well in my heart I was fond of it, in return; but Darby Cooney killed it—when he saw the love we had for one another, he killed it wid one blow of his stick ov a mornin' when he was batin' me, and when the little dog snarled at him for the same; och, ay, he killed id at one blow! And things that had no life in 'em I used to thry an' love too, bud he wouldn't let me; the handsome posies in the fields, an' in the ditches, an' the hedges along the roads; I used to pull 'em, an' hould 'em in my hand, an' look at 'em, and smell to 'em, and think they made my life a little happier. Bud he would take them from me too, an' throw 'em away, or stamp his feet on 'em, an' tell me they made me idle, an' curse them an' me, and threaten to bate me well if ever I minded 'em agin. Bud och, it's talking to no purpose I am; I have other words to say to you—the words that I promised to say."

"God help you, poor girl!" said Ned Fennell.

"Amin, an' amin, God help me."

"Whose hand is the other hand, that is now over you, along with Darby Cooney's?"

"Do you call to mind the bould, wicked, young boy, that was sittin' at this fire, the same mornin' I spoke about, awhile sence?"

"Yes, I recollect the promising young gentleman well."

"He's a big boy now, an' a sthrong boy, an' more wicked now he's sthrong, an' he hates me, an' hates the ground I thread on—ay, an' hates every livin' crature, I believe, the same that he hates me—he hates even Darby Cooney, tho' they're all an' all together; an' his hand it is that's as heavy over me now, as Darby Cooney's own hand ever was."

"Was that the fellow who watched you, while you were speaking with me a little while since, in the town below?"

"It was his own self. Darby Cooney and that boy are afeard that if I went from 'em I'd turn informer on 'em; an' the other day they both swore out—oaths terrible enough to rise the roof o' the house, that they'd have my blood, and berry my corpse where no one could ever find it; and

that no church-yard sod should cover it if I went from 'em."

"You must leave them, for all that," said Ned thoughtfully.

She looked up into his face eagerly, her blue eyes still running over with tears. For the first time since he had entered the hovel, he now observantly regarded her features. They were ten times more beautiful than in childhood they had been, and her person and limbs, though poorly and even scantily clothed, were of exquisite proportion.

"How very like you, Helen!" soliloquised Ned; "how very like you, my own Helen!"

His own Helen? and Gaby M'Neary not knowing a word about the matter? "Blur-an-ages!" Ah, poor Ned, so much for your worldly wisdom.

"Did I hear you rightly that time?" asked poor Mary Cooney, as she still looked up at him.

"You did, my poor girl."

"An' did you mane that it's yourself that would make me go away from Darby Cooney?"

"Yes, indeed, I meant that, Mary."

"Och, the Heavens reward you for the word, and put the good luck in your road, for ever an' ever!"

She gently took his hand, which hung down by the side of the three-legged stool, placed it in both of hers, and continued—

"It calls to my mind, stronger nor ever, the words you said to me, an' that I ever an' always thought of, from that day to this—the mornin' you came in here, many's the long, weary year ago, to give me the good, warm milk, and the good, white bread."

"And what words were they, Mary?"

"Och, shure you tould me, that when you'd grow up, an' be a young man, an' have money as your father used to have it, you'd share your dinner wid me, as well as your breakfast; an' that, still an' ever you'd let me be near you, an' save me from Darby Cooney's hand. An' now you're a young man, an' now you have the money, by coorse; an' now, I'll come to you, from Darby Cooney; och, I'll watch over you, an' I'll run on your errands to the world's end; an' I'll do everything in your house, to make you like me,

an' to make you have the happy heart ; an I'll love you as well, och ay, as well as ever I loved the poor, little babby ; an'—"

"My poor girl, listen to me. I will take you from Darby Cooney. I can do that at least. You shall not be his poor, terrified slave for a day longer. Do you remember the good old priest, that came in here, the last night I saw you?"

"I remember a very good ould man comin' in, an' axin' me a great many things ; but I didn't know before now he was a priest ; I didn't b'lieve id, I mane, for Darby Cooney tould me he was a bad man, 'a big ould divil,' he said ; an' och, it's often he tould me the same afore, of other good men that I b'lieved were priests ; good men, that used to meet us on the roads, when the crowds would be comin' out of the house that they called the chapel o' God—but Darby Cooney used to call it 'ould Nick's house,' an tell me if I went into it the priests would lay hould on me, an' drag me to the gallows, an' hang me ; an' then I used to ax him, what was the mainin' of the chapel o' God—" Ned Fennell interrupted her, shuddering.

"Stop, Mary, stop ; tell me no more of those things, and not a word more about Darby Cooney. We'll never speak of him any more at all ; we'll try and forget him, and everything he ever told you, and everything about him. But listen to me now. Listen to me well, poor Mary ; I will try and make that good old priest your friend ; and I'll be your friend myself, Mary ; and together we will take you from Darby Cooney, and keep the arm over your head, to save you from his threats ; and the word I spoke to you, when I was a little boy, I will keep with you now, and to the day of my death, or to the day of your death, yes, my poor girl, you shall indeed share my breakfast, and share my dinner, and share my purse too, as long as it pleases God Almighty to give me a breakfast, or a dinner, or a sixpence for myself ; and that good old priest, Mary, will tell you what the Chapel of God is, and make you know what to say, and what to do, in God's chapel, that so you may grow to be good, and happy, and have the whole world love you ; and I will love you too, Mary. I will love you with a brother's tenderest love ; and, poor child—"

Ned's own voice here failed him, and he stopped speak-

ing. Her eyes had been fixed upon his face all the time he was addressing her. She now saw his quivering lip, as she heard his broken tones, and suddenly falling on her knees, and clasping her hands, while she still looked up at him, tried to utter the gratitude, the love, and the happiness of her hitherto miserable young heart; but the effort was vain; her beautiful lips only moved in silent spasms; her beautiful throat only worked in unison with them; and, at last, she covered her face with her hands, and sobbed and wept, loudly and passionately.

"And I must leave you now, Mary," resumed Ned Fennell, "and the first thing I shall do is to go to that good priest—" She started up, clapping her hands, and interrupted him.

"Och, yes, yes; quit me! quit me! it's only too long you are here! an' all my fault, all my fault! See what the love for you made me do! an' that's not the way the love ought to show itself—bud the love put the danger out o' my head—the Lord forgi' me for it! Run home, run your ways home! Darby Cooney is within your doors this night—an' he's within 'em for no good! Och, Darby Cooney would think no more o' killin' you, or any other Christian crature, nor he'd think o' killin' a black *keerogue*! * Make speed home; the man o' the house where my ten-ther-hearted boy stops, has money—an' Darby Cooney is gone to take that money; an' the one he has made as wicked as himself is on the watch for him. Make speed home, I say! Make speed, an' lay hands on Darby Cooney; an' hould him fast, fast, fast! Be bowld an' sthrong, an' may the Heavens be your safeguard! an' don't mind goin' to that good priest to-night, or we both may suffer from it; only make speed home—make speed home."

"Good night, then, my poor girl." He again held out his hand; she took it in one of hers, but threw the other round his neck, and kissed his lips, as she had done many years ago, at their first parting; and Ned Fennell received her kiss, without infringing one jot upon the resolutions he had formed before entering the cabin.

But he did not take her advice, to go straight home, without calling on Father Connell, and in so doing Ned was wrong, almost fatally wrong.

*A species of black beetle.

CHAPTER XIX.

OUR disreputable old acquaintance had spent more than one night before the present one, in Nick M'Grath's hay-loft, and he did not, for the purpose which had brought him there, remain idle or unobservant. He contrived to discover that the kitchen window which looked into the yard, could from the circumstance of its turning on hinges, be opened by pushing it inward, provided its little bolt were first slipped back; and again, that as it admitted daylight through oiled paper, instead of glass, it would not be very difficult to get one's hand inside this frail barrier, and thereby undo the bolt, which to one side fastened the sash to the window-frame. He further found out, that Nelly Breehan had charge of the key of the hall-door, and that she used to place it every night in the salt-box over the kitchen fire; nor did he allow himself to remain ignorant of the positions, in the little old house, of the sleeping apartments of Nick M'Grath, his apprentice, and his housekeeper.

In Nick M'Grath's establishment, Nelly Breehan was just as much Ned Fennell's friend, as Peggy Molloy had been when he lived with Father Connell; the old woman would do anything for him. She would, for instance, lend him her latch-key on a night when he reckoned upon being out later than her master or herself could, according to their habits, afford to sit up for him; and only carefully latching the street door after him, and cautioning him to lock it carefully when he should come home, she would deposit her key in her salt-box; and before retiring for the night, put a "red sod" in the kitchen grate, that, by its agency, he might not be in want of a lighted candle upon going to his own bedroom. And, indeed, it was under favor of arrangements such as these here described, that upon this particular night Ned Fennell left home, for the shower of houses.

He had not been very long absent, when, though in no great hurry, Robin Costigan began to think it was time to commence certain planned operations.

After Nick M'Grath had collected, among the fools in his

hay-loft, the tin porringers in which their milk had been served to them, and, accompanied by Ned Fennell, had gone down the step-ladder, leaving them in the dark, the poor fellows, continued jabbering, each in his own peculiar fashion and idiom, for some considerable time. Costigan watched and listened to them attentively. One by one, a voice fell off from the great clamor of tongues ; and one by one they fell asleep—yellow George being the very last to do so, as was his latest breath—for that night at least—Costigan heard him mumble, evidently to Paddy Moran, who snored at his side—"Take off o' me, ye blackamoor's breed, take your feet off o' me—we're free—take off, or I'll run you through—by Herrins."

Costigan, in the silence, or rather in the general snoring, which succeeded to the general babble, raised himself very cautiously and slowly, in his own lair, to a sitting position ; out of the bag which he had worn on his shoulder, he took a handful of woollen rags, and tied them round his feet ; first depositing his brogues in it ; and then, with a perfectly noiseless tread, descended the step-ladder, into the yard.

Here one glance at the oiled paper of the kitchen-window informed him that he had been out in one of his calculations ; for that Nelly Breehan had not yet retired to bed. Stealthily approaching the window, and cautiously peeping through a little hole in one of its economical panes, he perceived that she must, however, soon go to her sleeping-chamber, as she was kneeling to her prayers, evidently in devout preparation for so doing. The beggarman scowled at the old woman, but observed her closely. Before arising from her knees she piously clasped her hands and looked upwards ; he cursed her.

She got up ; puffed at the "red sod," to ascertain whether it was sufficiently ignited to allow her favorite to light his candle at it ; and while she did so, her own face glowed as brightly as did the "red sod" itself—and then she approached the kitchen-window, and laid her hand upon its sash. Costigan, fearing that she was about to come out into the yard, suddenly crouched down under the window, and when he had cleared it, hobbled—not at all afraid of alarming her by his footsteps—and squatted himself in a remote and gloomy corner. But the housekeeper only shot the bolt of the window to its full extent. Next,

she left the kitchen, to put a heavy bar across—as the old robber could well comprehend—the door which let into the yard; and, finally, stopping with her apron a fit of chronic coughing which came on, in order that her master might not know she had been so long out of bed, she softly ascended to her dormitory in the garret.

The small, dim window of her bed-room looked into the yard. From the corner in which he crouched, Robin Costigan knew it, and watched it closely. The incrustations of dust and dirt upon it, served, like a dim screen, to show her actions only in black shadows, yet, even by those actions, so badly interpreted, he knew she was disrobing herself very leisurely, and he again muttered curses against the unconscious old spinster, because she took up so much time in her peculiar proceedings—by the way, she at that moment certainly not thinking that there could be any one, in the wide world, so much interested about them.

At length, the little, dim window became black; the housekeeper had put out her candle, and was in bed. Robin stoop up, but still did not move from his corner; on the contrary, he squeezed himself as closely as he could into it. And, “the curse o’ the ould divil be on her lyin’ down,” he cautiously growled, “what kep her from the sthraw, this night, of all nights o’ the year? May I never see the daylight, if I don’t remember it to her.”

After waiting still a reasonable time, and judging that the old woman ought now to be fast asleep, he turned his observation towards the hay-loft. Thinking that he heard one of the fools muttering, he hollowed his hand, and put it to his ear. The night-blast eddied by him, and filling and whistling through hand and ear, incapacitated him from distinguishing any sound but that which it thus made.

“Curses purshue the wind!” he hissed, making an impotent attempt, as if to grasp and control it with his unoccupied hand: it whistled on, as if in laughter and scorn.

Soon it lulled a little; and again he bent his head down to listen for sounds from the hay-loft. But none came. At least, none of the kind he had anticipated. A loud chorus of inharmonious snoring was all that reached him. He noiselessly ascended the step-ladder, and peeped in.

Not a blade of hay rustled. He again descended into the yard, and again approached the kitchen-window. Some one coughed inside the house. His practised ear soon discerned the direction whence the cough came. He raised his clenched fist, unlippped, with a grin, his hideous teeth, and inwardly said—

“I’ll pay you for this, too, you ould *colloch* !”

The interruption was not renewed. Carefully and noiselessly he now removed the oiled paper from the window, put in his arm, and with a dexterous and knowing application of finger and thumb, shot back the bolt. The window then opened to the gentlest push of his hand; he clambered up to it, and knelt upon the lower part of its frame. A piece of mortar fell from the top of the recess of the window, and crashed and rattled among some kitchen utensils placed on a table beneath. For a moment he became perfectly still. Kneeling, as has been said, on the window frame, and also supporting himself by resting his hands and arms upon it, while his head and body crouched down and poked forward, not a muscle had motion except those of his eyes—and even his eyes could but glare, like those of a startled tiger, checked in his spring, into the deep darkness of the kitchen.

But there came no stir through the house, to hint that the harsh and sudden noise had been heard by its inmates; and very, very cautiously he proceeded to place one muffled foot on the table, having first felt about with it for an open spot where it might rest without causing fresh clatter. The next moment he was standing upon the table, on both feet; and the next, on the middle of the kitchen floor, his ear intently watching the silence, and his eye the darkness around him.

Every way satisfied with the observations of both senses, he next crept to the fire, groping with one foot before the other, and with both hands, before him and beside him, lest he might stumble over, or hit himself against some unseen object. Here he again had recourse to the wallet slung over his shoulder. Extracting from it a small dark lantern, he took the candle out of this, and with cautious and thin drawn puffs at the “red sod” in the grate, soon had a light: one might imagine a sketch of Costigan’s face, while he puffed at his sod; its characteristic features; the

puckered action of his mouth, his down-turned eyes, with their scowling, overhanging brows—down-turned, because their glances were darted into the turf he held; the mixed expression of eagerness, caution, malignity, and black purpose, legible over his whole visage; while the portrait was lighted from underneath by the fierce ruddy glow of the sod, not more than a few inches removed from his lips.

He raised the lid of the salt-box, and possessed himself of the key of the hall-door. He gained that door; believing it locked, turned the key in the lock without producing any effect, and for a moment stood baffled and confounded, and in no amiable humor, until by peering close he discovered his mistake. A few seconds after, the door was half opened, when, protruding his head and shoulders into the street, and glancing upward and downward, he whistled in so peculiar a key and manner that an uninitiated ear would be at a loss to decide whether the sound arose near or far off.

A small, small echo, and at the same time a perfect imitation of the whistle, floated through the stilled street; and very soon after, a ragged, muscular, square-built lad, whose age you could not determine at a glance, was admitted by Robin Costigan into Nick M'Grath's quiet peaceable house.

Robin softly put down the latch of the door again. His new come acquaintance was about to speak, but he shook his fist, snarling, and all but growling at him, and whispered into his very ear, "Stale afther me."

The barefooted pupil accordingly followed his preceptor into the kitchen. Costigan produced another supply of woollen rags, handed them to him, and motioned him to sit on the floor and adjust them over his feet.

"Can't I spake now?" demanded the youth, as he complied with these instructions.

"Yes, but spake low an' little."

"I've news for you then, Darby Cooney. We must run for it or we're lost."

"Why? How so?"

"Becase Mary Cooney is wid the 'prentice this present minit in Joan Flaherty's house, an' she's tellin' him all about us."

"Ha! by the mortal! How do you know that?"

"I seen him abroad in the shop wid her, an' I followed him to Joan Flaherty's."

"You did?" He scowled on the lad as if it were he who had committed some great fault. "You did, did you? You're quite shure?"

"Ay, shure."

"Long threatenin' comes at last, then," said Costigan, in a low, slow, horrible tone; "bud come, no more words now. There's work to do. Tie on, tie on, an' hurry, or I'll cripple you."

"An' won't you run while the road is clear?"

"Let you do what I bid you, or you'll rue it as well as Mary Cooney. Hurry, I say. There, don't stir now till I come to you."

He went to the hall-door, turned the key in the lock, and secured it about his own person.

"Are you ready?" he asked, coming back into the kitchen.

"I'm ready—but—"

"Hould your prate, or—" there was another horrible threat, accompanied with terrible oaths.

"Open your ear wide now, an' listen to me, fur your life—at the peril o' your life, mind; do you hear? Why don't you answer me?" He shook his scholar fiercely by the shoulders, and glared and grinned into his face, their features almost touching.

"I'm listenin' hard."

"Come here." Costigan seized him by the arm, and hurried him over to the kitchen grate. "Do you see that red sod o' turf?"

"I see id well."

"Mind me then, I bid you;" he applied his lips closely to the boy's ear, and communicated some orders in a whisper, so close and fine that the opposite ear might almost be said to have scarcely heard it.

"Have you the right undherstandin' o' what I say?"

"I have."

"You're positive sartin that you have?"

"I am. I'll give id back to you, an' shure that 'ud tell you whether I am or not;" and in his turn he whispered a nearly soundless whisper into his master's ear.

"Is that id?"

"Ay, by the mortal, that's id. Let me see that you go by ordhers right, or woe betide you. Here, take this." He placed the kitchen poker in the hand of his young colleague, and armed himself with the iron bar of its door.

"Close afther me now, an' stale asy—asy, I tell you."

Without the slightest noise from the tread of their feet, the pair mounted the stairs, Costigan holding his lantern sideways, in order that his follower might have the advantage of its light.

They entered Ned Fennell's bed-room. The bed was unoccupied, and had not been lain in.

"'Tis a thruth, by —!" muttered Costigan, grinding his set teeth. "No matther—"

He turned, and still led the way onward. They gained the housekeeper's room. She was fast asleep, though her sleep seemed troubled, perhaps with some dream of danger. Costigan raised his bar in both hands. She muttered something; he paused one instant; he perfectly caught the words, "In the most holy and blessed name of—" and these words saved her from his hand. It was not pity; it was not a return of human feeling to the heart of the desperado, that stayed his uplifted arm; least of all could it have been a religious sentiment. He afterwards said himself that it was a passing fright at something; but whatever it was the old woman slept on, for the time, in peace.

He lighted the candle she had extinguished, and placed it on the floor, at the end of her bed, to avoid startling her from her sleep by its glare; and then he again whispered a short command to his pupil—

"If she stirs, touch her here," he drew his finger in a line across her forehead, without however coming in contact with it—"hould id that way in your hands, an' keep it ready, an' watch her well." He poised the kitchen poker, so as perfectly to satisfy his own judgment, in both the hands of the less experienced practitioner—"keep well in your mind what I tould you in the kitchen, an' have your ears wide open for the whistle, an' do all your work well, for your life."

Cautiously, but quickly, Robin Costigan stole out of the housekeeper's bed-chamber. The lad remained alone at her bed-side; his weapon raised in both hands over his

right shoulder, and his eyes fixed in full, and ghastly watchfulness, on the old woman's face. Yes, that boyish eye, which ought, at that moment, to have been closed in sweet and innocent slumber, or if awake at all, ought to have sparkled with the reflected merriment of a mind amused and at ease; that boyish eye was distended with only the murderer's stony abstraction of purpose, while the youthful lips, instead of quivering to the laugh or carol of boyhood, were firmly closed in the expression of a deadly and unflinching resolve.

A sudden crash sounded down stairs. The aged female started out of her sleep, and opened her eyes. They instantly encountered those which were watching her. A second glance made her understand what meant the figure, with the raised poker, and the haggard, hellish face, which stood over her; and she was about to sit up in bed, and had begun to scream, when one blow, descending on the exact spot over which Costigan had described the air-drawn line with his finger, made her perfectly motionless and quiet.

With the concentrated force of his whole young frame, the boy had inflicted that blow; it was indeed, joined with the weight of his weapon, too much for him; the poker jarred in his hands; he unconsciously let it go; it found its way to the foot of the bed, fell thence on the floor, and overthrew and extinguished the candle; and he stood in complete darkness, with, he assured himself, the corpse of the human being he had just deprived of life. Terror, and horror of his own act fell on him. He trembled, his teeth chattered, his knees smote each other; and, unable to stir a step, cold sweat flowed down his face.

His master gained, meantime, the door of Nick M'Grath's bedroom; and, as he had anticipated, found it fastened on the inside. But he did not hesitate, for an instant, forcibly to insert the iron bar between the lock and the door-jamb; and then, with a single wrench, the door was burst open. It was the noise of this violence, which had startled Nelly Breehan from her sleep.

"Who are you? What do you want here?" demanded Nick M'Grath of the ferocious intruder, as Costigan held his lantern over him. The old man was on his hands and knees, in bed, fumbling under the pillow.

"I want your money; an' there's no spare time for talkin'—your money!—hurry."

"Ned Fennell! Ned Fennell! a robber! a robber here, Ned Fennell!"

"Say that again, or cry out one word more, an' by the mortal, I'll chop you into pound pieces! Come, hurry, I say. The key of this desk in the corner! Come! hand it out here!" the villain interrupting himself with a "Hah!" now snatched at a waistcoat, which partly protruded from beneath the pillow. Nick M'Grath flung himself upon the article of dress, in the pocket of which was, indeed, the identical key required by Costigan; and a struggle ensued between both; Nick M'Grath again setting up his cries for Ned Fennell, as loudly as he could vociferate.

"Hah! I see I must stop your pipe, then, by the mortal!"

Costigan placed the lantern on the floor, and then grasped by the throat the still prostrate old man. But his gripe no longer had in it the force of youth or of manhood; even the few years that had elapsed since we first know the robber had, together with brutal indulgences and excesses, considerably enfeebled his arm; and in a trial of strength, for dear, dear life, even our little, fat, round friend proved himself almost a match for him. At all events, Nick M'Grath fastened the fingers of both his hands tightly in Costigan's long grey locks, now fallen from under his straw hat, and tugged with might and main. Costigan undid his grasp, and seized the waistcoat. Nick M'Grath followed his example, secured it at the other end, and was dragged off his bed into the middle of the room—now shrieking shrilly for Ned Fennell, while his antagonist's curses and threats mingled with the old man's almost despairing cries.

"It's only makin' a fool o' myself I am," growled Costigan, suddenly relinquishing his hold of the waistcoat, starting up, seizing the iron bar, and raising it high over the prostrate Nick M'Grath. But the next instant his proposed victim saw him fall headlong on the floor by his side, while the heavy weapon came, with a ringing noise, against the boards.

"Here I am, sir," said Ned Fennell, immediately after this happened—"get up, sir, and put on your clothes, and let us try to seure this worthy person."

He almost flung himself on Costigan's body, placed a knee upon his breast-bone, and held down both his arms.

"Ned, my good boy, God bless you, God bless you; and I won't forget this to you, Ned, I won't indeed;" and Nick M'Grath proceeded, with as much speed as his haste, fright, and exhaustion would permit, to make his toilet.

"You shan't escape the third hanging, Robin Costigan, said Ned Fennell to his prisoner.

Robin Costigan returned no word of answer. He only rolled his eyes, as a manacled wild beast would have done, bent inwards his under-lip, and gave a shrill fife-like whistle. It was a variety in the practice of the art of whistling, in which he seemed such an adept.

"What's that for?" asked Ned Fennell.

Still he received no answer. The ear-splitting signal was only renewed.

"You have helpers in the house. Then I must be alive, I see. Are you ready to go down to the shop, sir?" he resumed, questioning his old master.

"I am quite ready, Ned, my good boy; but is he safe, Neddy?"

"He is, sir; I have him as safe for you, and for the gallows, as his heart can wish."

Was it the tightness of the grasp by which he was held, that produced at this instant, certain sounds in his throat, or was it really a laugh of derision, that escaped from Robin Costigan? His old friend Ned looked close into his eyes, to help himself to ascertain the question, one way or another. But in them he could discern nothing but an ominous scowl.

"You will now go down to the shop, sir, if you please," resumed Ned, "and bring me up a good strong rope; I must tie this worthy neck and heels before I search the house. Light the candle at the lantern, and take the lantern with you."

"I will, Ned, my good boy—I will."

Doing just as he was bid, with the docility of a child, the old man hobbled out of the room.

"I was in the nick of time to spoil your sport, Robin," observed Ned to his unwilling companion.

"You may say that," he was answered.

"I was watching at the door, here, to see what you would do, Robin."

"How did you get into the house?"

"Hah! you'd like to know that, would you? I'll tell you, then. After trying my latch-key at the hall-door, and finding that it would not do for this evening, I turned to the back of the premises, Robin, scaled the yard wall, and entered the house, by the kitchen-window, which you so obligingly left open for me, Robin, I thank you."

"Curses for ever purshue me! That went out o' my head, shure enough."

"Never mind, my poor friend; 'twas only a slip of memory—and we'll teach you, if we can, how to avoid such little mistakes in future. You and I met before, Robin, my dear—does your memory fail you in that too?"

"No, I remember id well, an' I'll pay you fer it, as well as for this, before I die."

"Don't, Robby; don't be so particular; I'll never ask you for payment, upon my word: all that you ever got at my hands I have given gratis, and with hearty good will. You are no creditor of mine, I assure you."

"I'll pay you to the last farthin', for all that."

"Ha! ha! and you really expect to make a fool of the hangman, over again, Robin?"

"I'll make you no answer to that, no more than to any other gibe of yours; but I'll tell you my mind, on another thing, as often as you like; an' I say to you now—an' don't let what I say go from your mind—I'll make you rue the day you ever crossed me."

"The snow-ball an' all?—Fie, for shame on you, Rob—you bear malice I see, after play; but no matter. You give me a fair warning, and I had better make sure of you then—keep my eye on you—see that the hangman's rope is strong, and that you hang until you are dead—and even after that I had better see, with my own eyes, that the earth covers you."

"You'd want to do all that, an' more, to keep yourself out o' harm."

Ned Fennell's light vein changed a little. Impotent as the old robber's threat, under present circumstances, might seem, still, it was made so often, and with such self-possession, that Ned now felt a little uneasy and qualmish.

"So, mind yourself, my *callawn*."

"Well then, Robin my friend, I *will* mind myself. And so, we'll begin at once, if you please."

From his master, who now returned into his bedroom, he snatched the rope he had gone for.

"Hold one of his feet tight for a moment, sir, that's all I shall ask you to do. You are surely able for so much—"

"Oh! aint I, Neddy, my boy? Ask himself, Neddy; ask if I'm not able for a good deal more than that, when he had me alone here, all to himself; ah! if you'd see the way I gave it to him, when—"

"Don't tell me about it now, sir if you please—wait till I have him quite fast and secure for you."

"Well I will, Neddy, my boy."

And with coil after coil, and with knot after knot, Ned soon had Robin Costigan as well manacled as ever was man before him.

The instant Nick M'Grath saw the process ended, he went down on his knees, beside the prostrate Costigan, and took up his interrupted demonstration of the "way he gave it to him;" clenching his little fist, protruding one of his fat knuckles, and punching his late antagonist in all the softer parts of his body, not excepting his face, over and over. And suddenly he changed the single monotonous expression, which accompanied all this punishment.

"'Twas your masther bid you do it," he said, chuckling triumphantly.

"My masther! I have no masther, you ould fool. What do you mane?"

"I mane what I say. 'Twas your masther bid you do it, I tell you; an' a masther you have, for as clever a hand as you think yourself; an' I can tell you who he is too, if you purtend to forget him; he's your masther, the divil, you jail-bird—ould Nick, my pet;" and punch, punch, punch, with his knuckle, still accompanied every word that the exulting old man uttered.

A glare of red light here suddenly burst on the unshuttered window, fully illuminating the apartment.

"What can that be?" said Ned Fennell, running to the window, which gave into the little yard.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Costigan, down in his very stomach.

"Merciful Heavens! the hay-loft is on fire," rejoined Ned.

"Eh? what? what, Ned? don't say that, Ned, my good boy, don't say that," cried poor Nick M'Grath, suddenly lowered in his high tones, and struck almost into inaction by this new terror, as was testified by his weak and mumbling voice, shaking frame, and vain attempts to rise from his kneeling posture. "Don't say that; Ned, if it is the thruth you're spakin' we must all be desthroyed in a few minutes! The warerooms, you know, Ned—the warerooms all round the hay-loft—"

Another very original kind of laugh escaped Costigan; his chest and shoulders undergoing quick convulsions, in proof of the internal pleasure it gave him.

"I know, sir," answered Ned to his poor master, "I know too well what danger we are in—come here, sir," he dragged the bewildered old man to a window which looked into the street, thrust out his own head and shoulders, after he had with great difficulty raised it up, and with all the power of his lungs shouted "fire! fire!"

"Now, for heaven's sake, dear sir, endeavor to keep your wits about you, or all will indeed be lost—fire! fire!" Ned shouted again.

"I will, Ned, my boy. I will keep all my wits about me—you'll see I will—an' the fools, Ned! my poor fools! are they to be roasted alive too? Only why didn't they keep off the fire and the ill loock from the house an' the place, an' such a plenty ov 'em in id this night, of all the nights in the year."

The old malefactor again laughed his own well esteemed laugh.

"Silence! you grey-headed scoundrel," said Ned Fennell, turning fiercely upon him, "silence! or you'll tempt me to brain you on this spot; for your laugh frightens me like the laugh of a devil!" He snatched up the iron bar which lay near Costigan, sprang to the window, and a third time shouted "fire!"

Sashes were now thrown up in the opposite houses, and voices, in shrieking alarm, demanded where the fire was; and when Ned answered, they, in their turns, gave him back his fearful cry of "fire, fire!" and disappeared into their houses to dress hastily, and issue forth to volunteer their best efforts to arrest the calamity.

"Now, sir," resumed Ned beseechingly to his master, "do what I tell you, for God's sake; go down stairs, get the key of the hall-door, and let in some of the neighbors, to help me to put out the fire—I must work by myself till they get in—Lord help us, what's this?—why the old man is either dying or struck with sickness." He thus interrupted himself, as he perceived that Nick M'Grath was now sitting on the floor, with his back to the wall, smiling and muttering, and unable to make the slightest exertion.

Ned Fennell stood a moment in almost agonized thought. He then darted down stairs, the bar of iron in his hands.

In a few seconds Robin Costigan knew that he heard the noise of battering at the street-door, on the inside; and in a few more was certain that Ned Fennell had, for the present, been obliged to give up the attempt in despair.

"Curses on his gandher head," growled Costigan—"he hasn't brains enough in id to give a minute's guess that the key is in my own pocket."

Again the old robber bent his ear to all the noises around him.

He heard other and other window-sashes thrown up, and then the screaming demands of "where—where?" and reverberations of the wide cry of "fire! fire! fire!" running, like fire itself, up and down the street—the street which, a few moments before, had been as dully and as deadly silent, as the sealed tomb. After this the noise of running feet sounded abroad, of which a great many came to Nick M'Grath's house door, while voices roared and bellowed out entreaties and commands to have it opened; and while the still gathering crowd knocked and kicked at it, till the street echoed again. "A sledge, a sledge!" he then heard them say; and still the clamor of running feet and frightened voices increased every instant. And in the midst of this uproar the curfew-bell, before mentioned as hung in the high structure, over the Tholsel, now only a few yards distant, suddenly clanged out a thrilling peal; it was designedly rung in a hurried and irregular manner, sometimes slow and low, sometimes loud and fast, conveying to the already terrified minds of those who heard it a fancy that, suddenly wakened out of its sleep, like themselves, it also shared their present trepidation. At all events, as its clash, clash, broke over the midnight repose of the little city,

penetrating its every nook, and reaching even to its widespread suburbs, no tocsin ever produced a greater panic.

Crash! at the hall-door below, and Costigan swore that it was burst open. He was right, and immediately he heard running and vociferating through the house, and almost at the same moment his apprentice quickly, yet stealthily, glided into the room.

"Your knife here!" said the old offender.

The not unapt boy looked, comprehended, and instantly proceeded to cut the cords that bound his master.

"You done id, then!" growled Costigan during this rapid process.

"I did—well."

"Is the hall-dour wide open fur us?"

"As wide open as hell's hall-dour is fur us."

"Folly on, then!" and Costigan jumped up, and was hastening out of the apartment.

"Is he safe?" questioned his young colleague pointing to Nick M'Grath, who now lay huddled up in a corner, and as silent as if he were dead.

"No, but the fright 'ill do for him—whether or no, we havn't time now; no, nor the tools convanient; make speed aftther me, I say."

In a short time, indeed, the two worthies had escaped from the house almost unnoticed.

Meantime, after his failure at the hall-door, Ned Fennell had rushed into the yard. Flames were issuing through the open doorway of the hay-loft, and with them came a very horrible clamor and clatter from the poor idiots within it; each wretched being expressing, in his own accustomed phraseology, the frantic fears that possessed him. So that much of the ludicrous ran strangely through the fearfulness of the scene. Ned Fennell's flesh crept; but he was about to bound up the step-ladder, when, his scanty portion of attire fringed with blades of burning hay, the colossal Mickie appeared at its top, and crying out:—"a-rodge! a-rodge! come out o' that, murther o' Heaven! come out o' that, a-rodge!" leaped into the yard, clear over Ned Fennell's head, rolled about for an instant on the ground, then gathered himself up, and clambering into the kitchen-window, galloped through the house, as he had entered it.

Immediately after, Ned Fennell was groping his way through the dense smoke with which the hay-loft was filled. Louder than ever came the screeches and gabble of the poor fools upon his ear. He called out to them, over and over, to approach the doorway and escape. The obstinate creatures only strove to hide themselves closer in the hay. Choking with the smoke, he groped about, and seized one of them.

"No, you beggin' *bochach*," cried this person. "No, we're free! no houl't is to be laid on us! By Herrins, I'll —" But here Ned Fennell twirled him down the step-ladder.

Three more of them Ned saved in the same manner; encountering from each similar resistance, though in different ways. To accomplish his purpose with Paddy Moran, the vicious and dangerous idiot, he was obliged to thump him well, and stun him with repeated blows on the head, aimed as well as he could with his right hand, while he held him tight with his left. He knew that there was yet another—the poor deaf and dumb simpleton; but he, alas, must be left to perish. Ned no longer had a second's time to search for him. The fire was rapidly gaining inward; even at this moment of terrible excitement, he had presence of mind enough to perceive that it had been kindled near the doorway. And excited indeed he was; his own brain and marrow felt to him as if on fire too. He began to tear away the blazing hay nearest to him, and toss it into the yard: in a few seconds he gave God thanks, to hear some one else laboring at his side. The smoke cleared away a little, and again he fervently thanked Heaven that it was the poor trebly afflicted being whom he had given up for lost.

The swinging clash and roar of the town-bell now broke upon him. Shortly afterwards, he heard the breaking in of the hall-door, and he had help enough. Half-dressed men and lads filled the yard, and bounded up the ladder, into the hay-loft; and in half an hour, by their agency, and that of a good pump to their hands, in a corner, all was safe.

"God bless you, my son," said the voice of Father Connell, addressing Ned, as, for the last time, he was hurrying down the ladder—"they told me that the fire was in this

direction, and I had a great fear for the house that my son lived in, and I could not stay away from it. God bless you, Neddy, my boy."

Ned sprang to him. They kissed each other on the cheeks, and Edmund bent his knee to the old priest, as, the "God bless you," was repeated; then, still half-choking and burnt, though not dangerously, in the face and hands, he hurried Father Connell up to Nick M'Grath's bed-room, preparing him on the way, in a few words, with an account of what had recently happened there.

On entering the apartment, he started in great surprise and some consternation, at seeing the spot where so very lately he had left Costigan so well tied up, now quite unoccupied, except by fragments of the "good strong rope," which Ned had so boastfully coiled and knotted round and round him. The uncomfortable threats of the old ruffian returned to his mind;—and this sudden escape seemed to give by no means a pleasant earnest of their being carried into effect. He returned in a race to the yard, whispered Tom Naddy, whom he had seen there among the crowd, and in a few bounds regained the bedroom.

Ned and Father Connell looked about them for Nick M'Grath. He was still crippled up in the corner, and still smiling, though almost insensible.

"Oh, sir," said Ned to his companion, "it was for this I brought you here."

They raised the old man to his bed, and undressed, and covered him up well. Ned then ran for a physician, speedily returned with one, and poor Nick M'Grath, having been judiciously bled, gradually shook off the first approach of an apoplectic attack, and regained his senses. Other comforting treatment was applied, and he expressed a wish to be left alone with Father Connell.

Their interview was a long one—it should have been mentioned that they were old friends. Father Connell summoned Edmund Fennell, to call in another professional person—an attorney. In much alarm, the lad inquired if his old master was dangerously ill; the priest said, not at present. The man of law arrived, and he and Father Connell spent some time at Nick M'Grath's bedside. After this, the poor "buffalo-man" seemed much at his ease and

recovering fast. In a few days following he was dead; and as Father Connell and his adopted son sat together, after his funeral, the former acquainted Neddy Fennell that, by virtue of a will, lying in his, Father Connell's desk, and witnessed by himself, Nick M'Grath, not having any relations that he knew of, had bequeathed to the person who had saved his life from the robber's hand, and whom previously he had loved, almost as if he were his own child, all his acquired money, in different shapes, together with his stock in trade, and the interest in his little, old, dingy house, and interests in other houses of the town.

The only drawback on the full amount of the bequest, was a legacy of a hundred pounds to Nelly Breehan. But Ned could not have been the worse of this; for was not she dead? No—all the credit of fair intentions to kill her with her own kitchen poker, as well as all the inward gratification resulting from the certainty that she had been so disposed of, we accord indeed to the amiable young person who, after Nelly herself, had most to do with the question; dead, however, she was not, but, on the contrary, quite alive and up, to receive her little fortune, and to enjoy it in a quiet relief from worldly care and labor.



CHAPTER XX.

ROBIN COSTIGAN and his apprentice gained the street. It was still very dark, though past midnight. Persons all crying—"fire!—fire!" continued to run by them. From these they concealed themselves, as well as they could, sometimes by standing stock-still in a doorway, sometimes by turning for an instant into the sevenfold darkness of a lane, or an open archway; and thus, by degrees, they crept, or dodged on until they were within a few yards of the bridge, to cross which would have been their nearest route to the shower of houses.

But the nearest route they did not contemplate taking. Costigan now knew quite enough of young Ned Fennell, to be assured that he would not neglect, on this occasion,

to send some persons to look after him, and his youthful colleague. So, turning to the right from the bridge, the pair entered, still very stealthily, upon the beautiful walk called the canal walk, which, for a considerable distance, ran by the river's edge; and, having once thought themselves fairly free of observation here, they ran forward with a speed that could only be surpassed by that of two courier devils, despatched on a mission of great importance to Beelzebub, along the kind of black causeway, which Milton has built between his hell and earth.

Gaining the rear of some mills, a good distance from the town, they jumped upon a weir, which in a diagonal sweep allowed passage, though a slippery and unsafe one, to the opposite side of the river; and thence, it was the intention of the fugitives, to gain, by a wide *detour*, Joan Flaherty's house.

Costigan, still of course leading the way, had not proceeded, ankle deep, in the foam at its top, more than a few yards along the weir, when he suddenly stopped, bent and crouched down his body, and looked keenly through the darkness before him. The next instant, he turned and stepped as rapidly as was possible through the polished, slimy stones under his foot, whispering to his follower as he passed him:—

"They're lookin' fur us along this road; bud come afther me still."

"Who's lookin' fur us?" demanded the boy, in alarm, and he too peered through the thick darkness.

Some shadowy figures certainly approached them; the foremost one, that of a woman. The young observer still looked, till fear and fancy invested this female with a face and features now never to be forgotten by him. They seemed alive too, only that the eyes were closed. He trembled, turned, tripped, and fell; and as he arose, still to follow his leader, blood was flowing from the wound on his forehead, over his haggard, young features. The persons from whom they fled were, after all, a poor, old, tottering man, his wife, equally old and feeble, and a little grandson, then returning from a begging expedition, along the well-known short cut of the weir.

As fast as they had run down the canal walk, they now ran back along it, until they were again delivered from it,

into the town. And even now, they would not venture over the bridge they had before avoided. Passing it, they turned into a narrow street, making a parallel with that in which Nick M'Grath lived. Here all was comparative quiet; they could hear, however, the distant noise of voices around his house. At the end of the narrow street, they were in the very heart of the town, and in the widest part of it. To their right hand few or no persons hastening to the scene of the fire appeared coming against them; and they therefore skulked forward at that side of the way. They passed the city jail, surmounted by its court-house, both scowling sideways at it, although Costigan had, before now, made very light of its thick walls, iron doors, and black dungeons. They journeyed on, to the extremity of the town; crossed a little bridge, covering a narrow, but rapid stream, into the Irish town; now completely unobserved, raced through it, leaving behind them on their way the fine, old cathedral with its very oddly-shaped steeple, and mysterious round tower; turned down a suburb street; gained another bridge of three arches, spanning the river, within about three quarters of a mile of that which they had shunned; continued to run against its steep rise; arrived on its highest point, and stood still to breathe.

A few poor puffs of breath had not escaped them, however, when, fancying that footsteps echoed behind them, they again broke away. Not far from the other end of the bridge, a wretched by-road led immediately into Gallows Green. But, believing that pursuers were still in their rear, and gaining fast upon them, Costigan would not run the risk of mispending the half minute necessary to arrive at it. Nearer to him, to one side, off the road, a new cabin had been half erected; and at its back an old churchyard cut through to allow sufficient space for its site; so that it was overtopped by an almost perpendicular bank of loose, crumbly earth, studded—though they were only now half embedded in it—with human bones and skulls, layer over layer. After darting through the open cabin, against this bank, Robin Costigan and his apprentice began to scramble upwards. The loose, dry earth, and the poor relics of mortality, gave way under their hands and feet, and clattered about their ears; but still up they toiled, until fairly

exhausted, they at length sank in a luxuriant broad-bladed, dark green grass which plumed the graves in the most populous recesses of the ancient and long neglected cemetery.

Here Costigan uttered not a word ; only growling as he fell flat, and buried his face in the grass. His companion sat up, resting his back against a headstone, and gazing vacantly upon another, at only a few steps' distance. The faintest, faintest gleam of dawn now began to move, like a changing spirit, through the deep murkiness of the November morning. As the boy continued to gaze upon the blank of the headstone, he believed that a something, a little less dark than itself, came and stood against it. Still he looked, and the blank, vague thing became by degrees the shade of that aged woman, life moving her lips, though her eyes were still shut as he had seen them on the weir, and her brow was now stained with blood. His hair stirred and erected itself on his scalp ; he screamed, jumped up, and ran wildly through the churchyard. Costigan, with horrid curses, also rose and strode about in quest of him. When found, he beat with his fists his wretched pupil until the boy's flesh was black and blue, and even his conscience quieted for the moment under the influence of a new terror. In a few moments afterwards the pair were standing at Joan Flaherty's door.

CHAPTER XXI.

As soon as Ned Fennell had left the beggar-girl, the poor thing sat down on the straw which was to be her bed for the night, and laying her forehead on her knees, and closing her eyes, as if purposely to shut out all surrounding evidences of her real lot, began to indulge in bright visions of happiness and heart's ease to come ; nor were the long fluttering sighs that soon escaped from her bosom, nor the stilly and dew-like tears which gently won their way through her shut lids, indicative of any interruption to this fascinating series of castle-building.

"*Thackeen, thackeen**, hearkee to me," said a whispering voice almost over her.

She looked up, and by the dim light of her greased rush saw a grey-headed woman leaning over the mud wall, famed to us of yore.

"Come here, an' hearkee to me," continued this near neighbor.

"What is it, honest woman?" questioned the beggar-girl, standing upon the spot which the other overlooked.

"I was overhearin' your discourse just now wid Masther Neddy Fennell; an' it's a good right you have to be afeard of Darby Cooney's hand as you call him; for Darby Cooney knows by this time that yourself and the young man were together, an' he knows you're afther informin' on him."

"Och, och, don't say that to me, good woman, whoever you are, an' may the blessins sthrew your path every day you rise."

"It's as thrue as that you're standin' on Joan Flaherty's flure. The boy—the devil's babby I mane in the shape iv a boy—that follys Darby Cooney, was on Ned Fennell's thrack whin he came here, an' he hard a'most every word ye said through the cracks in the dour; I seen him wid my own two eyes."

"Och, then, pray fur my sowl, honest woman, for Darby Cooney's hand will soon spill my blood, an' he'll throw the poor corpse where no eye will ever see id more, an' where no blessed sod will cover id! Och, och, what am I to do? or where, on the face of the livin' earth, am I to turn myself from this spot!"

"You must make a bowld run for id, ma colleen, an' you you must hurry too, an' you must hide yourself well from Darby Cooney's eye, or it's a thruth that all will soon be over wid you."

"An' och, och, who'll hide me, or who'll screen me from him? He'd find me out anywhere at all; oh, I'm lost an' gone fur ever."

She wrung her hands and beat her breast in despair. "Husth! husth! isn't that his step outside o' the dour?"

Her friendly neighbor hastily dropped from her place on the wall into her own cabin; and the girl stood palsied

with terror, straining her eyes and ears towards the door of Joan Flaherty's house.

But the new-found comforter quickly showed her head again over the top of the dividing wall, whispering :—

"It was a false alarm, ma colleen ; he's not there this time."

"May the Heavens be your portion for that one little word !" cried poor Mary, clasping her hands.

"But I tell you you haven't a moment to look behind you or before you ; if he comes back an' finds you there—"

"Och, you needn't tell me, you needn't tell me ! I'll run the world over from him, an' I'll hide—" she paused as she was opening the door, and added, broken-heartedly, "but where can I hide from Darby Cooney ?"

"Lave the dooer half open, that he may be thinkin' id was by it you left the cabin—no—wait—don't stir till I go round to you—don't stir beyond the threshold till I bid you."

In a moment after, the beggar-girl heard this person speaking in to her from her own doorway—the thresholds of the two doors met in fact.

"Are you listenin' to me, good child ?"

"Och, I am listenin'."

"When Darby Cooney comes back an' misses you, he'll look fur the thrack o' your bare feet in the puddle here, but he mustn't find id : see—make one step on this from your own dour, an' another on my thrashold, an' then in here with you to myself."

While delivering these instructions, she placed in the mire an upturned stool ; the poor girl understood and obeyed her, and in a few seconds jumped on the floor of her compassionate and zealous neighbor, who quickly and cautiously fastened her door.

"You're too purty, colleen dhas, to let us lave you in the power of Robin Costigan—Darby Cooney, I mane—after what has happened ; an' young Ned Fennell won't keep the shet hand to them that saves you fur himself, I'm thinking."

"He said long, long ago, he'd give me money, an' when he does I'll give id all to you, if you'll keep me from Darby Cooney."

"Money makes the ould mare throt, good child, and if I don't get the price o' new duds from Neddy Fennell, I haven't knowledge, that's all. Bud there's no time fur discoorsin'. Come, this is the last place Darby Cooney will look for you in; he'll never think you stopped so near him. Bud we'll make sure. An' first we must hide your ould mantle; an' we must hide this gownd too; an' we must put this ould bed-gownd on you; an' we must tie this ould cap around your purty face an' your purty jaws; ay, we'll play some o' Darby Cooney's thricks on his ownself, ay, mostha, we will—bud, mother o' glory!" the woman now shrieked out, "what's this I see on your bare back undher my eyes?"

During the course of her last speech her fingers were as busy as was her tongue, stripping off the little beggar the articles of dress that she doomed for a time to oblivion; and thus Mary's neck and back became exposed.

The astonished girl demanded the cause of her sudden exclamation.

"Tell me," and she gasped out the questions, "tell me, an' tell me thruly, as there's a heaven above us! who are you? whose child are you? are you Darby Cooney's daughter? do you know yourself to be Darby Cooney's daughter?"

"Och, no, avourneen, I don't know any such thing; an' I'm shure I'm not Darby Cooney's daughter—an' the Lord forbid I was! He tells me I am not his child, every day in the year, to show me what a burthen I'm to him; an' shure—as I said to my tendher-hearted boy afore now—it's out o' the coorse o' natur' that I could be the child of the man that holds such a hard hand over me, an' that' ud take my very life this blessed night wid as little marcy as he would a dog's—och, no, no, no, I'm not his daughter!"

"An' whose child are ye, then? tell me, for your life!"

"Avoch, I don't know whose child I am—may the heavens pity me, I don't know."

"Do you remember anything that happened to you afore bein' wid Darby Cooney?"

"No—stop—bud no again. There was a little shade ov a notion came across my mind that moment—but it's gone away again—gone—gone—it was like a dhass ov a song beginnin' to croone in my very sowl, widin—"

Her new friend interrupted her by suddenly singing out a part of a wild, melancholy air. The girl started.

"That's the very tune," she said, "an' I'm shure I hard id afore I came to be along wid Darby Cooney."

"An' tell me another thing—do you remember bein' carried about the counthry on a woman's back?"

Mary again started, and her beautiful, young face glowed with intelligent anxiety, as she replied:—

"I do—for the first time, I call id to mind now—an' I am shure it was the woman that carried me on her back that used to sing the dhass ov a song—and wait a bit over again. There's another thing coming on my mind at present—the woman left me in the middle of a field one day, an' I fell asleep, I b'lieve, an' when I woke I wasn't on the woman's back bud on a man's back; an'—"

The listener here cast her arms round Mary Cooney's neck, kissed her again and again, but was silent, for tears and sobs would not let her utter a word. At length she spoke in broken sentences.

"You're my own daughter, colleen beg, you're my own daughter! The blood o' my heart is round your heart, and I gave you the milk from my breasts! ay, ay, I'd know you for his child and mine by barely lookin' at you," she placed her hands on the girl's shoulders, and her eyes ran wistfully from one to another of the features she gazed upon. "Ay, ay, you have his very look, fur he was handsome then, tho' he's owld an' cantankerous now. An' there's the mark an' token between your shoulders—och, yis, my own own child you are!" She again embraced the beggar girl, who warmly returned the caresses, saying:—

"Och, och! if it's the thruth that I find a mother in you, this night, the Lord above be praised fur ever!"

"I'll make you shure, I'll make you shure. Bud there's no time for spakin'—hurry into this bed now—an' now lie down—lie down—I'll cover you up—an' don't have fear—don't have fear, colleen beg—I saved Darby Cooney's own life wanst—an' Darby Cooney's bad, black blood shall make that threshold wet afore he harms one ov the shinin' hairs o' your head, my own chona-ma-chree; lie down, lie down, an' lie quiet, quiet, an' never fear. I'll hide you, I'll hide you. Darby Cooney has his match in this cabin, to-

night, and hurt shan't come near you, my colleen beg. There, you're covered up well now; and I'll hide your ould duds—" She stepped nimbly upon her three-legged stool, and stuffed them into the thatch of her house, nearest to her hand—and, as will be recollected, that was near enough—"an' I'll fasten the dour well; and I'll put out the rush; an' then let me see if ten Darby Cooneys dares to lay a finger on you. Often I see the poor, little wake ken keepin' off the bull-dog from her chickens—an' I'll keep off Darby Cooney from my chicken. Whisht! I hear somethin' like a far noise; don't as much as draw your breath loud—an' don't have fear still; I'll sit here on the stool, close by you, in the dark, an' a little mouse 'ud make a louder noise nor I'll make; bud for all that I'll watch you well; and by the sowl o' my body! if a bad hand does come over you—"

She sprang up, seized the only knife in her establishment, the wooden-hafted one, and began sharpening it very cautiously, on the bars of her little grate.

"Whisht, over again!" The clang of the alarm-bell, for the fire at Nick M'Grath's house, now reached them. "That's a fire-bell, an' the Lord defend your tenther-hearted boy from the harms of fire, this holy an' blessed night!"

"Och, amen, amen, I say!" wailed poor Mary in her bed; "bud the fear is on my heart that Darby Cooney is the man that makes id ring out, for all that."

"Never mind, never mind, ma colleen; you'll be safe from him, at any rate, while Nelly Carty's sowl an' body stays together."

She ran back to her stool; after puffing out her substitute for a candle, sat on it, the sharpened old knife now held tight in her right hand, and continued in a whisper:—

"Lie quieter nor ever now, colleen beg—not a stir from you—not another single word from you—an' I'm not goin' to spake another single word myself, only I'll sit here an' watch over you—watch over you."

Perfect darkness, and perfect silence now prevailed in the hovel. No stir of her person, no rustle of her garments came from Nelly Carty's stool, and her supposed new found daughter remained as stillly as herself. Hours wore away,

and it was the same, except that now and then Bridget Mulrooney gave a sudden tumble and snore in her own bed, at which misther pig would also turn in his snug corner, and grunt out—"what in the world is that?" And yet another hour might have passed, and despite her mortal fears, the way-weary poor beggar-girl began to breathe hard, in overpowering slumber, when suddenly the watcher at her bedside withdrew the hand which, expressive of protection, had hitherto rested on her shoulder, and putting back with it the grey locks from her ears, prepared them to listen intently. She could not be mistaken. It was Darby Cooney's growl, though now escaping him in the lowest possible key, that sounded at Joan Flaherty's door.

"Mary!" he called, evidently with his mouth to one of the chinks of the ricketty barrier, thinking that it was secure on the inside. He repeated the call, with deep threats and curses. He kicked against the door, and it flew wide open. Nelly Carty next could distinguish that he lit a fresh rush, and was searching for Mary Cooney from corner to corner of his lodgings. Next she heard a low conference between him and another person, and immediately after, rays of red light darted like golden arrows through the chinks of her own door, as, in fulfilment of her anticipations, the old robber went out to look for footprints in the mire. There was a pause. Had he gone away? No. She heard his breathing outside her threshold—and she believed that his fell eye was scrutinizing the inside of her dwelling—or, at least, vainly endeavoring to do so, for, notwithstanding that the faint dawn began to grow more visible out of doors, little chance had it of yet becoming even hinted in the interior of one of the shower of houses; and, as will be recollected, Nelly Carty had long ago extinguished her rush-light.

He returned into Joan Flaherty's hut. Hah! was he clambering up the dividing wall, with his light, to take a more satisfactory survey of his neighbor's premises? Without the slightest noise, Nelly Carty slid from her stool, and then, without rustling a straw of her bed, stretched herself under the tattered coverlid, as still as if she were dead. Her eyes seemed closed too, yet could she peer between their lids.

Upwards and still upwards, over the wall came the feeble

beams of Costigan's rush, and she soon saw himself, or at least his head and shoulders leaning forward, while he held the light above him, and every now and then changed his position, that he might shed it by degrees upon every spot of Nelly Carty's floor. His glance fixed, and became fearfully steady on the couch occupied by Nelly Carty and poor Mary; and it seemed to his old friend that he detected the presence of a second person at her side. He was preparing to descend from the wall into her cabin. She vainly tried, by a soft whisper and pressure, to awaken the beggar-girl, and warn her against screaming out, or in any other way betraying herself, and was obliged to start up in a sitting posture, as Costigan's motions became more alarming.

"Who are you? and what do you want?" she demanded.

"You know well who I am—an' you know well who it is that I want. I want Mary Cooney—the little girl that's in the bed wid you;" Mary here shrieked. "Yes, that's her purty little voice—she's callin' out to come to me."

"Don't come down there, like a robber an' a murderer, in the dead o' the night into my house, or I'll make you rue the hour!"

"We'll thry."

Some ten years ago, Costigan would have made light of jumping from the top of the wall on the floor beneath him. At present, however, he was obliged to turn and suspend himself by the hands, from its edge, that he might allow himself to drop easily downward. While proceeding in this operation, Nelly Carty standing on her stool, and desperately griping the haft of her old knife, was immediately at his back—nay, she had even fixed her eye upon the spot where she was to strike him. But one thought of other days, and then a rapidly succeeding dread of taking human life came upon her. Her knife fell from her hand. She did not, however, remain inactive; summoning all her strength, which was by no means contemptible, she suddenly seized, ere he had dropped upon her floor, both his feet, and shoved him upwards over the wall, until he fell heavily at his own lawful side of it.

"Still have no fear, ma colleen beg!" now shouted the triumphant Nelly Carty, remaining fixed on her stool, her eyes steadfastly rivetted on the place where she expected Costigan to re-appear.

In a little time, indeed, his head again began to emerge over the wall, concentrated hell blackening his scowl, and all his features.

"An' you'll thry id again, will you?" demanded Nelly Carty, baring her stalwart arms for another deed of prowess.

"Mary Cooney, my poor child—where are you, Mary Cooney?" called out the voice of a new-comer, in kindest accents, under Joan Flaherty's roof.

The poor girl, shivering and chattering in her straw, could not call to mind whose voice it was, and yet, instant relief came to her heart as it struck upon her ear. Nelly Carty did know whose voice it was, and stood greatly amazed, and almost as much afraid of it as she was of Robin Costigan's. A third individual in the neighboring wigwam, after he heard it, and had glanced into the features of the person from whose lungs it proceeded, began to howl like a lashed hound, and crying out—"Run for id, masther—run for id!"—raced out of the apartment, still howling. Robin Costigan himself just turned his head, looked downward, and with the bellow of a wild bull, now dropped of his own accord upon the floor of his hotel, and then, to the observant ear of Nelly Carty, evidently followed the advice and the example just proposed to him. After a second pause, the woman, from one touch of her newly come feelings, upon her very heart's pith, lost all her former dread of the accents of old Father Connell's voice, and serious and saddened, but with more respectability of manner than had ever marked her expression during her whole wretched life before, approached Mary Cooney's bed.

"You're free ov him, colleen," she said—"Darby Cooney is gone from this neighborhood, an' that bad boy wid him."

The girl started up, clapping hands for joy.

"An' who made 'em go?" she asked.

"The good man that you hard callin' out for you in the next house—the good ould priest that Masther Neddy Fennell tould you last night would help him to keep you from Darby Cooney; an' he went to talk to the good ould priest about you, I'll be bound, last night, after quitting you, for all that you said to hindher him; an' I'll guess another thing fur you: the good ould priest is now lookin'

fur you, to take you home to his own house—will you go wid him, alanna?"

"Och, an' I will, surely! If 'twas nothin' else, hasn't he the power, however he come by id, to frighten away Darby Cooney from me—an' who else, wid Masther Neddy Fennell's help, can hide me, and keep the hand over me, for the time to come? Bud you say you're my mother, an' will you bid me to go?"

Nelly Carty, drawing in her lips hard, was silent for a moment. Some tears then stole down her cheeks as she answered:—

"Yes, I will bid you go wid him, ma vourneen; 'twill be fur the best—'twill be fur the best—fur the present, at laste; an' listen! there's the ould priest callin' out fur you, over agin. Bounce up on the flure, an' here's your own ould things to put on afore I let him in to you; an' don't spake a word to him, alanna, about my thoughts that you are my child, till another time, when I'll bid you; an' hurry, hurry, now; I'm goin' fur him."

As Nelly Carty approached her door to unfasten it, the morning's blessed light—blessed even on a November morning—was spreading tolerably well through the interior of her hut, and by its help she saw an eye peeping in through one of the many cracks of that frail safeguard. She started back. But at a second glance it could not be Robin Costigan's eye, neither had it the expression nor the color of Father Connell's. It would have done very well for the eye of a jackdaw, on an extragigantic scale; as she smiled complacently at the re-assurance, an uncommonly low whistle, just breathing in, through another chink, quite convinced her of the identity of its possessor.

"Why thin, Tom Naddy, what in the world brings you here, at this hour in the mornin'?" she asked, flinging her door wide open.

Word Tom uttered not; but, half turning his head, without suspending his whistle, beckoned, as it were, with one of his shoulders, to a group of strong young fellows at his back, to follow him into the cabin.

Of this group each held a something in his hand. Two or three clutched good cudgels; another, what seemed a smaker's hammer; while two or more bore coils o' quite

new rope, whether for the comparatively peaceful purpose of securing somebody's limbs, or for another, too serious to be lightly mentioned, has never been perfectly ascertained. As for Tom Naddy himself, he had his hands in his waistcoat pockets and held nothing at all in them, so far as could be seen or known.

He lounged very leisurely into the hovel, and first struck by the figure of Mary Cooney, in a corner, stopped short, gazing and whistling at her. Then he as suddenly scraped one of his feet, and pulled his hat a little downward by way of a polite salute, and passed to Bridget Mulrooney's bed. The old potato-beggar awoke just as he was looking down upon her, his head turned sideways, and first screamed aloud, and then began to scold and curse him. He quietly proceeded to Nelly-Carty's empty couch, and then, to the pig's well occupied one, and when this master of the house also began to remonstrate against his uncere- monious intrusion on his luxurious morning slumbers, he only patted the animal's fat shoulders and sides, while his scrutinizing glances stole round and round the apartment. Finally he started up, and hurrying to the open door, and snatching his hands out of their repositories, spread wide the fingers of each, pointed outwards in various directions through the shower of houses, and then running himself through one of the crooked ways of the puzzle, and followed by his men, each running through another of its crooked ways, he and they were soon out of sight and hearing.

A few moments after, Father Connell, and Mary Cooney, side by side, and hand in hand, were also threading the labyrinth. After a few words with her, the bare-legged and bare-headed beggar-girl had taken his offered hand, smilingly and trustingly, as a child of six years old might have done; and while he worked and squeezed hers in it, as we know to have been his wont, on similar occasions, she did not shrink from the real pain thus inflicted, as, indeed, she might reasonably have done, but, looking up into his face, only smiled the more.

Nelly Carty watched the pair from her open doorway, till she could see them no longer. She then knelt on her threshold, and crossing her face with her hands, sobbed

out, in a weak, feminine tone—"Ay, alanna machree—go home wid the priest—an' may he make you a bettther an' a happier woman than your misfortunate mother ever was, afore you."

CHAPTER XXII.

MISS BESSY LANIGAN was the proprietress of a small, genteel house in a small genteel street, where none but small, genteel houses, inhabited by small, genteel people, held a place. No shop was to be seen in it, or any other evidence of an occupant who might be supposed to earn his or her bread by traffic, or handicraft pursuits. Towards its end indeed, a small, genteel boarding-school for young ladies, might have been found, but as this was not illustrated by a brass plate on the little, green hall-door, it passed well enough for a small, genteel, private house also.

Miss Bessie Lanigan herself was on a scale of small gentility with her house, her street, and her neighbors. Her figure was small, and her dress genteel—barely genteel, just a degree or two removed from thread-bare genteel; her little drawing-room was, by a series of contrivances, genteel; her voice was small and genteel; her talk small and genteel; her intellect, and her acquirements just as small, and just as genteel.

No person in her native city boasted a wider circle of acquaintances, among the small genteel, than did Miss Bessy Lanigan; and indeed she merited this distinction; her prodigious knowledge of the affairs of others, and her readiness, nay zeal, in imparting that knowledge, would alone have entitled her to it. But the little lady, furthermore, played whist and the mere Irish game of five-and-twenty, incomparably well; she was always good-humored—nay, in recollection of former times—absolutely frisky; but above all other things, Miss Bessy Lanigan was good-natured. How? She had lived a certain number of years, and yet had never been married, nay, had never refused an offer of marriage; but instead of becoming soured at these

circumstances, or envious of those whose fortunes were differently shaped, it seemed to do her little heart good to rejoice in, to promote, and particularly to be made confidentially acquainted with the love affairs of her younger associates, from one end of the town to the other. Let it be added that Miss Bessy Lanigan was sentimental to the small, genteel extent of a perusal of a certain class of the novels of the era in which she lived, as well as of that before it; and poetical too, so far as an acquaintance which the love lyrics of those times might deserve the term.

Nor was her acquaintance limited to the small genteel alone. Some of the great genteel themselves—Heaven bless the mark!—who lived in a larger private street; in larger houses, and with everything larger surrounding them, shone upon her with the light of their countenances; and this is going to appear.

On a fine autumn evening, as Miss Bessy reclined genteelly on a little sofa in her little drawing-room, waiting for the hour to go out on an invitation to tea—for scarcely ever did her engagements, or her means, allow her to take tea at home—a hasty, though lengthened assault was made on the brightest of brass knockers at her hall-door—an oval-shaped one, of about four inches long—and, in a few moments after, a very lovely girl bounded into the room.

Had Miss Lanigan known Mary Cooney, and not known this visitor, she might have started at the supposed apparition of poor Mary, suddenly appearing fashionably dressed before her. For the young lady and the beggar-girl were of the same height, with the same turn of figure, and symmetry of limb; with the same blue eyes, or very nearly so, the same golden hair, the same general expression—their very smile was the same; and a difference in their age could scarce be detected. Thus Miss Lanigan might, as has been said, have been startled at this vision of Mary Cooney in fine masquerade; but the next instant would have removed her delusion, for when the young lady began to speak, and to express herself, through the still more emphatic language of movement, action, and manner, it could not have been our humble friend who stood before her.

When friendly greetings had been interchanged—"Gra-

cious me now," cried Miss Lanigan, "only to see you here, in such a flurry, my dear!"

"And I am in a flurry," answered the young lady, "I've run away from papa and Mr. Stanton, while they are at their wine, just to ask your advice as usual, when I shall have told you something; and I must be back again to them, in time to make their tea."

"On this beautiful evening, when nature's self woos you, in gentle language, if the absent youth does not, to saunter far and wide?" said Miss Lanigan, and waving her little hand she quoted—

" 'Primroses deck the bank's green side,
Cowslips enrich the valley,
The blackbird woos his destined bride,
Let's range the fields, my Sally.' "

"Oh, nonsense, now, dear Miss Lanigan—that is—I beg your pardon, I mean—but I have really something to say. Let us sit down till I take breath. How am I to begin? I scarce know how; I don't know whether to laugh or to cry; I don't know how to say it. A word against dear papa I will not utter; but every evening, since the last you spent with us, there is this Mr. Stanton, formally received by him, as my wooer, and as formally installing himself—the odious animal!—in the office. At first, I could laugh, till the tears came into my eyes, at the man; now, I really begin somehow to fear him—there is such a steady, stupid pertinacity in his proceedings."

"And you have bluntly rejected him, so often?" said the little cabinet councillor, "and he still continues his assiduities?"

"Yes, still continues his assiduities, as you are pleased to call them. Take a specimen from yesterday evening, of various ways in which he continues them. I had gone upstairs to the drawing-room, and was busily employed with some work, when his creaking shoes and he entered the room."

"Gracious me now! I vow and protest, my dear! Well, my love? There you were, seemingly engaged with your needle, and he came in?"

"I was really engaged with my needle, for I dislike seeming to do anything which I do not in reality do. He

sat for a long while on the edge of a remote chair, without opening his lips; his hideous eyes rolling about, as if they were glaring after a ghost, from which he seemed very eager to escape if possible."

"My goodness, my dear! On the edge of a chair too! Oh, the creature, my dear! Just as if soft things could be whispered from the edge of a remote chair. My gracious goodness! Well, love?"

"At length his eyes fixed on my needle and thread, and he got speech. 'Miss Helen—' said he, and he stopped."

"To which you made answer, 'Sir,' and you stopped, my dear?"

"'Miss Helen,' quoth he again. 'Do you know what I'm thinking I'll do?' 'No, indeed, Mr. Stanton,' I replied, 'what is it?' 'I'm thinking then that I'll—I'll break your thread, Miss.' 'Don't, sir, pray,' said I, and so he did not."

With a laugh that came from her usually merry heart, Helen M'Neary ended this anecdote. The little hysteric, "hi, hi, hi," of Miss Lanigan ably responded to her.

"Poor fellow, my dear, poor frightened fellow! It was his overpowering passion for you, that so bewildered him. If he could, he ought to have sung at the moment—

" 'Since you've taught me how to languish,
Teach, oh teach me, how to please.' "

"Well, my dear, what did he do or say then?"

"Nothing for a long while, not a word, not a stir reached me. Suddenly his shoes creaked, so loudly and abruptly that I started, and for the first time, looked fully at him. He was standing erect, one hand in a coat pocket. With that hand, from that pocket, he extracted, by-and-by, a soiled old pocket-book, of huge dimensions, and from it again, a letter, folded and watered. Then he advanced to me, and saying, 'I would thank you to read that, Miss Helen,' turned his back on me, and strode out of the room."

"Dear me! good gracious, my dear! a tender epistle! oh, can I see it, my dear? can I read it, love?" admired and interrogated Miss Lanigan.

"You can do both; I have it with me. Here it is, and perhaps you will let me read it for you."

"Oh, of all earthly things, my dear! gracious goodness! I am dying to hear it."

"Listen then," and Helen read, with a good mock gravity, the following, 'tender epistle,' as Miss Lanigan called it. The young lady, now young no longer, has handed it to us for insertion in these memoirs; we copy it word for word, and letter for letter; and moreover, we preserve it carefully for inspection, by any sceptic who may doubt, reasonably enough, however, the real existence of so valuable a document.

May 2, Anno Domini.

"DEAR HELEN,—I hope to be excused for taking the liberty of writing These few Lines to you, which I hope will be instigation of terminating my affection towards you, or a perpetual Existency for futurity, viz. in matrimonial bands. For i postively declare that I hold you in the utmost estimation, in respect of your principles, and other caracterizing transactions deserving the greatest attention; and, moreover, my particular motives for addressing you thus is, that you would be so partial and kind as to divulge a part of your sentiments to me, in an Answer to this Letter, which i shall expect instantaneously; and, moreover, i request and conjure you to be neutral about it, for fear of extending it into circulation, which would be no addition to Either of us. Now, dear Helen, i am candid with you, and Declaring to you in the following lines my intention, i am fully determined to undertake or rather promote myself in some measure, and as to Land property, its laborious attended By several difficulties, to wit, oppression of taxes and other tributes, high rents, and many other inconveniences to what there would be in a situation in the town. Now i hope you will answer this letter in the affirmative and negative manner, sincerely declaring your intention to me; and, moreover, i hope you will make a distinction or rather a choice of the Conduct and edefying abilities of youth for a permanent contract, for I hope to the great omni potent that I shall prove and humble and affectionate comrade until the termination of my existance. I hope you will excuse me for making so free, for i allow i am not qualyified with principles to equalize your, nor neither am i descended from such a dignified extraction. But i hope to God I shall ratify my declarations, if fortune favours me to obtain my wishes or elevates my mind that i can produce a character as worthy of attention as any other young man of my age in town or country, of my abilities, and I suppose you are not without knowing that it was a particular Business caused me to cross the Atlantic to Philedoa, although at my own expenses. But i hope to be retaliated handsomely at a future day, for i am the person was elected to go, and am the person that is in possession of the deed and will hold it, I shall expound nothing more in respect of that consequence as my acquaintance with you dear. It is still for i assure you it's a very near friend i would make such an open about a consequential affair.

"Write to me what your sentiments are in respect of me, and if you Encourage i shall more to you, and if you disencourage it never shall be

more but Bewried in Oblivion, no person the wiser, and i hope you will do the same, what i should think is a very proper way for both of us. Now i am confident you have Intimates in abundance, and i hope as i have placed a confidence in you, you will never show it to either of them, but burn it.

"Direct your letter thus, U. R. L.

"The name of the town and
Parish forward it soon,
Particular place and it will soon,
Be with me.

"Write immediately.

"I shall call to see,
Again in short,
But i expect it will
Be useless.

"No more at present,
From your loving
And affectionate friend,
Q. O. unexpounded."

"Well," said Helen M'Neary, looking steadfastly at her little companion, "what do you think of your tender epistle now, Miss Lanigan?"

"Think, my dear! Gracious goodness me, my dear!" was Miss Lanigan's only reply, while she returned the affectedly solemn stare of her young friend with a very puzzled look, not knowing how she was wished to answer.

"Do you continue to think it tender?"

"Bless me, no, my dear!" now beginning to see how she ought to reply.

"Do you think it the production of a gentleman?"

"Dear me, not at all; not a bit of gentility about it."

"Is it quite comprehensible? Do you perfectly understand it?"

"Me, my dear?"

"Why," said Helen, abandoning all her attempts at continuing grave, and again bursting into hearty laughter, "was there ever such a mass of puzzled vulgarity? and without saying a word of anything else connected with it, or the man who wrote it, you notice of course the fact of 'Q. O. unexpounded' placing his own letter with his own hand before me, in my father's house, whither he comes as a suitor at my father's invitation. What a 'characterizing transaction,' as he himself would call it. And then you also observe, of course, the incomprehensible manner in which he requires my answer to be directed, while he himself is to be its bearer. Why the person's head must be one great ravelled skein of confusion."

"Oh, good gracious, my dear! Surely—

"None ever had so strange an art,
His passion to convey."

Poor Q. O. unexpounded! Tell me, my dear, did you return any answer to this strange effusion?"

"Indeed I did, and here it is:—

"Mr. Q. O. unexpounded,—Your very perspicuous letter is certainly the instigation of terminating my affection towards you, and the perpetuity of future existence—you have full permission from me, I assure you, to promote yourself in some measure, both in the affirmative and negative manner, and according to the abilities of youth, you are welcome home from Philed, at your own expenses, and I would advise you by all means to hold the deed, and I hope to see you retaliated with all my heart—as you express it very clearly, calling to see me again will be useless.

"So no more at present,

"From your humble servant,

"G. O. unexpounded."

Both ladies indulged anew in laughter. At length Miss Lanigan resumed:—

"Why, my dear, rich as he is, the man must be a very low person. I thought from the first, that he had nothing of a genteel look about him; though, to tell the truth, his clothes are very nice and new, and his cambric very fine. Dear me! How did papa become acquainted with him?"

"That's a little secret. Twenty years ago, he was a poor and distant relation of our family; papa himself sent him out to America, to some mercantile friends, and he now returns to Ireland, rich enough, in papa's estimation, to become my husband. And oh, dear Miss Lanigan, you know papa's determination, in anything he once sets his mind upon; and you know if crossed in it, his terrific, his almost maniac temper—Heaven forgive his daughter, and only child, for saying it—and you can easily imagine what, under these circumstances, my fears for the future must be. Oh, I wish, I wish," the young lady continued, her manner completely altered, while tears rolled down her cheeks—"I wish—as I have often wished, since this misfortune began to threaten me—that I had been brought up under a mother's care, and that I had a mother now."

Miss Lanigan, not having heard the last words, ran on—

“Gracious goodness, my dear; the crisis of your fate approaches indeed, the distress of your plot thickens terribly! Bless me, my dear, what is to be done? Ah, Edmund, Edmund, why are you now absent from us!”

Helen M’Neary started up hastily, and seemed attentively studying some little pictures, on the walls of the little room, as she said—

“My dear Miss Lanigan, we are beginning to talk nonsense, I do fear. At all events, I cannot now enter into that question; oh, how I dread to enter into it; oh, I dread that my conduct has been all wrong; oh, why did I ever allow a childish, almost an infantine friendship, to become confirmed into a more serious attachment—at least, why did I ever let *him* know it!”

“Poor, dear, suffering soul!” said Miss Lanigan, sobbing sympathetically, as she rose and took Helen’s hand, looking up into the young lady’s face, as she stood about the height of Helen’s elbow.

“Why, at least,” continued Helen, “did I suffer the matter to steal upon me, without consulting my father, my only parent! And yet again, could I have dared to open my lips to him about it. Edmund Fennell *his* daughter’s lover! Edmund Fennell, poorly born, the protégé of a poor priest, and beyond everything else, a Roman Catholic! As to lineage or birth, I don’t think indeed there is much superiority on my father’s side in that respect; but, my dear Miss Lanigan, papa would as soon make the Pope of Rome, tiara and all, an alderman and mayor elect of his native city, as bestow his daughter on a papist—”

Helen said this, with something of a return of her laughing temperament.

“Good gracious defend us, my love! but why does not the youth himself come home, to advise you what to do—or at least, to console and cheer you? I protest and declare now, my dear, I begin to think that he takes your gentle distress very coolly—”

“Do not say that, Miss Lanigan, do not wrong poor Edmund. Oh, Miss Lanigan—will you—can you keep a secret—*my* secret? Ever since he gave up his business to enter college in Dublin, with a view to a profession, now

more than twelve months ago, I have had a letter from him almost every day—and advice and consolation he does offer me; but oh, are they of the description I ought to accept? Farewell—'tis more than time I should be at home. And what do you think sent him away from here to begin a new career, and perhaps a ruinous career, in Dublin? Oh, you will hate me for telling you! One word of mine—one foolish, vain word of mine! I was led to say it, however, in the hope that my father might—but I must hasten home—Farewell. Oh, I am indeed very, very erring—and”—Helen added, bursting into fresh and plentiful tears—“very, very unhappy!”

The young lady flew down stairs, without stopping for Miss Lanigan's advice. Had she really come expecting that any was to be had? Her little friend paused a moment in consternation at her hasty and agitated departure, and then ejaculating—“My gracious goodness! Dear me!” hurried to put on her things for going out to tea.

CHAPTER XXIII.

UPON that day, as has been observed, “Q. O. unpounded” dined at Gaby M'Neary's. Gaby provided him with a dinner he preferred himself, believing that it was one “fit for a king.” Somewhat unrefined, however, it certainly was; but no matter, Gaby did not do it the less justice on that account; and it may be conjectured that neither the tastes nor the experience of his guest found any fault with it. And yet Mr. Stanton scarcely touched a morsel of dinner, replying to every expostulation on the subject, while his large green-and-yellow eyes fixed on Helen—“No, sir; I'm obliged to you, I choose to admire.”

Dinner being over, and Helen supposed to be in the drawing-room, host and guest remained *tête-à-tête*. There was prime old port and sherry to hand, together with Helen's little dessert, and they looked very comfortable.

“Blug-a-bouns, man!” cried Gaby M'Neary. “Do you mean to keep the decanters before you all the evening?”

Fill your glass, and send them this way. Good ating deserves good drinking; and though you didn't stand like a man to your knife and fork during dinner, the more fool you; but I'll take my oath you shan't keep me thirsty at present."

"I ask your pardon, sir—may I make so bold as to give you a toast?"

"And heartily welcome, my buck."

"Well then, sir, I'll give you the-a, the-a—I'll give you, sir, Miss Helen M'Neary's very—good—health."

"Helen's health—here it goes. Come, no heel-taps to that toast, my chap. But tell me. Have you yet agreed on the day between you?"

"The-a—the-a—the day, sir? What day, sir?"

"Why, the splicing-day to be sure, you great goose."

"The-a—the splicing-day, sir?"

"Ay, to be sure—the wedding-day."

"No, indeed, sir, we have not."

"And why the devil havn't you? Why do you come here, sneaking about my house, for nothing? Why, man, when I made up to Helen's mother, I didn't give her time to say Jack Robinson, till I had made her consent to run away with me. I ran away with her mother, by Gog, or they would never have given her to me. Well, Masther Tom Naddy," Gaby continued, addressing that individual, as he entered the parlor—Tom having left the service of Father Connell, in the hope of "promoting himself," as Mr. Q. O. unexpounded would say—"Well, Masther Tom Naddy, you lazy, scheming rascal; have you hung Boxer, as I bid you?"

"Oh faix, sir, an' sure I did."

"And sure you did? Well, and you were in a damned hurry, my good chap. Boxer was as good a dog as ever nuzzled a rat," Gaby continued, turning his face to his son-in-law elect, "and I'm devilish sorry he's gone—devilish sorry."

"Didn't you tell me, sir, never to come before your face, till I had him well hanged for you?" questioned Tom Naddy.

"Go along, you scoundrel! you wouldn't be so ready to do anything that would be useful—no, you wouldn't—you'd take your time at that, and be damned to you."

"And the-a—the-a—poor Boxer, sir. What did he do, to deserve being hanged?" asked Mr. Stanton.

"He did enough, and more than enough, damn his blood—he turned his coat, the rascal."

"The-a—turned his coat, sir?"

"Yes, went to mass last Sunday, with that half-starved, whistling, popish cur there," meaning Tom Naddy, "but I'll have none of them that are reared up in my house on good Protestant ating and drinking do that—those that are brought up by old Popish priests may go to their masses, if they like, and to the devil afterwards; but I'll have none of my bringing up, cross themselves in a mass-house—ha! Mither Boxer, you know as much now, I b'lieve? Why, Dick Stanton, what are you about? there are the decanters with you again."

Dick Stanton hastened to push them home; his host filled, and drank a bumper, and then resumed, after a moment's cogitation:—

"Dick Stanton, I wouldn't have lost that poor dog for any money. He was worth his worth in gold; oh, I wish you could have seen him nuzzle a rat! And then, he was so fond of me; I'd give ten, twenty, ay, thirty pounds, to have him back—go down stairs out of that, you unlucky hang-man," to Tom Naddy, "you're laughing at me, you scoundrel, though you don't let me see it—go down stairs, or I'll knock your brains out, where you stand, with this decanter."

Tom Naddy accordingly lounged off, and Gaby re-addressed Mr. Q. O. unexpounded.

"Our two bottles are now nearly out between us, my good fellow, and so, I'll take my after-dinner nap, while you go up to Helen. And, do you hear me? none of your arm's length work any longer—have you kissed her yet?"

"Sir—the-a—kissed her, sir?"

"Yes, you long bamboo! didn't you hear me? Kissed her, I say."

"The—the-a—I declare, sir, never."

"Pah—I thought as much; off with you then, and do it this moment—stop—Blur-an'-ages! what's this? Why, Boxer, my poor boy, is it you? Blug-a-bouns! my poor ould dog, I'm glad to see you!" and Gaby M'Neary hugged Boxer with delight, as the animal jumped up on him, whining, and licking his hands.

"I'm not for bein' too hard on you, sir," said Tom Naddy, cautiously introducing merely his head at the door, "so, I won't be keepin' you up to your full word, by axin' the thirty pounds, that you said you'd give to get Boxer home again; bud I'm sure I'm in rason when I say I'll take the bare twenty that—"

"By Gog! you sneaking thief," interrupted Gaby M'Neary, "I'll make you laugh with t'other side of your mouth when I lay hands on you! Get out of my house in five minutes, or I'll—be off, you rascal!"

Tom a second time withdrew. Gaby finished at one fell swoop the wine before him, and patting Boxer—who laid his nose on his knee, looked up into his eyes, and described segments of circles with the whole length of his tail on the carpet—spoke again to Q. O. unexpounded.

"Now, I'll take my nap, at last, Dick; and so you mind your points above stairs; or if you don't, I hope that some one who has more in him than yourself, may carry off Helen from you, body and bones."

Thus admonished, Q. O. unexpounded stood up, lifted his cane from the floor, where it had lain at his feet, since before dinner, smoothed his powdered and pomatumed hair, felt his queue behind, to ascertain that it was directly between his shoulders, and, uttering a preparatory "hem," accompanied his creaking shoes, in search of his mistress.

Having reached the drawing-room door, he tapped at it with the head of his cane; and then, seizing that badge of gentility in the middle, held it before his face, a favorite action of his—for in this position, its golden head and eyes, and gold thread tassel, were displayed to the best advantage.

Helen had been but a few moments at home from Miss Lanigan's, and the command which gave him the right to enter was therefore uttered in a discomposed voice; she was able, however, to take a seat, near her tea-table, in perfect composure, before the door opened; so respectfully tedious were Mr. Stanton's motions.

Having got inside the door, he made a profound reverence, striking it with the most remote part of his person, as he did so, and then, his features wearing a lugubrious simper, by dint of Gaby M'Neary's good old wine, he advanced, and to Helen's great surprise, drew a chair much

closer to her than ever he had drawn chair before. He held up the cane still, and tapped its gold head against his yellow teeth, while his huge eyes gorged themselves on the young lady.

Helen suddenly looked him straight in the face, and, in features, simper, manner, and action, he underwent an immediate collapse. The cane was lowered, he rested his hands on his knees, and his glance wandered round the apartment. A long silence ensued. At length he said—

"The-a—hem! The-a—don't you think, Miss Helen, the-a—don't you think that Hessian boots are handsome wear!"

"You pay me a vast compliment, sir, by consulting me; but I really cannot say."

"Well—that's curious. The-a—you know New York, Miss Helen?"

"Upon my word, sir, I do not know New York."

"'Tis a nice place, then, Miss—just when the ship was sailing into New York, we ran short of grog."

"A very graphic description of New York, sir," and Helen's austerity of face now relaxed into a smile.

The wretched creature misinterpreted the smile's meaning, and he felt his courage remount into his heart, whence, a moment before, it had retreated like cold water.

"Miss Helen?"

"Mr. Stanton?"

"Do you know what your most worthy father is after telling me to do?"

"How should I know, Mr. Stanton?"

"Well I won't tell *you*, Miss Helen—only I'll show you."

And with a desperate plunge of resolution, before Helen could be at all aware of his abominable intention, he flung his arms around her neck. She started from her seat, and struggled, and screamed, while Q. O. unexpounded held her firmly in his bear's gripe, panting and blowing, as he endeavored awkwardly to effect his purpose. The young girl's neck and face were hurt with his odious, vice-like pressure. But she soon freed herself, and still screaming loudly, fled to her own room, and locked, and bolted herself in.

In the mean time Gaby M'Neary's bell rang violently, and his voice was heard through the house, shouting for

Tom Naddy, totally forgetful that, only a few moments before, he had issued a thundering fiat for his quitting the premises. So he shouted lustily, and rang, rang his bell, so as to make it quite a little tocsin, his restored friend, Boxer, snarling and barking at every shout, and every tug at the bell-pull. Gaby M'Neary was in fact the picture of a very angry man, suddenly awakened out of his after-dinner nap.

"Why did you keep me waiting on you, you brat? Why did you let me call and ring so often? And what the devil is this racket in my house?" he demanded of Tom Naddy, as that person made his appearance.

"Oh, sir, Misther Stanton—I'm beginnin' to be sore afeard he's a very wicked gentleman."

"Wicked, you scoundrel—he wicked? Is that all you can say in answer to my question? Wicked! Why anything of a sizeable fly would make him beg his life. What's this uproar in my house, I say again?"

"Misther Stanton, sir, is a fatter half-chokin' the young mistress."

"You infernal monkey! Is it making game of me you are?"

"No sir—no such thing. They was wrastling fur an hour, and then Miss Helen ran fur her life."

"Where's Mr. Stanton now?"

"The hall-dour was open, sir, an' he made his escape through id, as I kem up."

"Blug-a-bouns! Will no one tell me the reason of all this? Where's Miss M'Neary at present?"

"She's hidin' undher the bed in her own room, sir, half-kilt."

"Is she, you lying vagabond?"

Gaby scrambled up from his arm-chair, seized his stick, and stumped, might and main, towards Tom Naddy, who, however, by no means waited to be charged by his angry master, but walking pretty slowly through the doorway, went down the kitchen stairs. After him came Gaby's stick, bounding and rattling, while its owner roared forth—

"Take that, you mongrel whelp! I'll teach you how you'll humbug me, in my own house."

Without the slightest hurry or flurry of manner, Tom did take up the stick, placed it against the wall and then crack-

ing his fingers, and whistling melodiously, descended to his lower regions.

"Give it to me back again, you young rascal! do you hear? give me back my stick, I tell you!" But Tom was out of sight, and remained so; while his master, being out of a fit of gout only a few days, clung helplessly to the balustrade, not daring to venture down stairs, either after the stick or the person who had so much irritated him. He then raised his voice for "Helen! Helen!" she quickly answered her father's summons.

"What happened to make you frighten me out of my sleep, madam?"

"I have been grossly insulted, father."

"You have, have you? Be pleased to tell me where, and when, and how, and by whom."

"By that vulgar fool, and I will now say, ruffian, sir—that man Stanton."

"Why, what did he do to you? Did he knock you down?"

"I can't, father, I can't answer you."

"That is to say you won't. Gog's Blur-an-ages! Isn't this a poor case! No satisfaction for me, no matter who I ask—the next thing is to turn me out of the house between you, I suppose—will you speak to me, madam?"

"Dear, dear father, what shall I say?"

"How the devil do I know? Do you want me to tell you a story that you're to repeat to myself?"

"Sir, he had the insolence to seize me round the neck—and to hurt me—and to attempt to salute me, as if—"

"To salute you! you mean to kiss you? Blug-a-bouns! what else would you have him do?"

"Sir!"

"Sir! the man is going to be married to you, and he musn't kiss you? And was it for that you bawled out?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Certainly, sir! and wakened me out of my sound sleep. Isn't Dick Stanton to be married to you? Tell me that."

"No, sir," cried Helen, starting back, and holding up her head, while she spoke almost as loud as her father, and all but frowned on him.

"What do you say?"

Recollecting herself, Helen now repeated her "No, sir,"

in a more gentle and respectful tone, though not in a less determined one.

"No, sir? By the great Gog! he is, though! And he shall, and he must be! By the mother that bore you, he shall and must!"

"Oh, father, father! Oh, horrible!"

"Or you may walk out of that hall-door! Do you hear me?"

"Oh, God help me, sir, I do."

"I'll make you know he's to be married to you. I'll make you know it before you're seven days older. Blood-an'-thunder-an'-fury! to my very face the young hussey says this! But—I'll—have—my—way—in—my—own—house—or—" (you are now going to be guilty of bathos, Gaby) "or I'll make the devil box punch. Go out of my sight, you young—woman," added Gaby, gulping down a very different word—"go out of my sight—go to your own room! By the Hokey farmer, I'll make every one of ye dance from the top of the house to the bottom. In seven days you'll marry Dick Stanton, my lady, or you may go marry t' ould blind man on the bridge. Quit my sight, I say!"

Helen accordingly went up stairs, almost despairing

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE next day, by dint of unusual gravity and suavity of deportment, Tom Naddy succeeded in making his master forget all his disrespectful conduct of the preceding evening, and once more they were tolerable friends.

In the course of the day, there came a great knocking and ringing at the hall-door. Tom answered it, and remained for some time talking earnestly with the visitor, a country-looking man of rather a respectable appearance. Gaby M'Neary saw them together on the steps leading to his hall-door, and loudly and angrily called Tom in. To his surprise, the curious fellow was weeping, and enacting

to perfection the part of one trying to suppress a sudden and great grief. Gaby M'Neary inquired the cause of his affliction, and was informed that the man was a relation of his, from a village about fifteen miles off, and that he had come to announce to him the death of his father, and to summon him to the funeral ; and Tom implored to be permitted to go. After many characteristic demurs on the part of Gaby, his prayer was granted.

We come to the next day, and are in Dublin, arriving at Edmund Fennell's lodgings, in that city, just as he himself returns to them, late in the day, to dinner.

Going up stairs, and entering his sitting-room, Edmund started back, as if he had seen a spectre. In the middle of the apartment, whistling a very favorite air, stood Tom Naddy.

"The devil!" cried Edmund.

"No, Masther Neddy, nor any of his blood relations."

"What on earth brought you here?—any bad news?"

"Myself doesn't know what news there's from the Hague to-day, nor it'sn't much I care, to be plain wid you, sir; bud we have fine news at home."

"What is it, Tom, what is it?"

"Heugh-a—sure you don't care an ould crooked thrawn—neen what it is, an' you so grand a gentleman, here in Dublin now, an' never comin' next or near us, for I don't know how long ago?"

"Do answer me, Tom, what brings you up from the country? Out with it at once."

"Why thin I will," said Tom very quietly. "Miss Helen M'Neary is to be married next week, plase God."

"Married! Come, Tom, don't attempt to play off any of your old jokes on me."

"Ould jokes, sir? Sure it's *you* know well I'm no great hand at a joke, young or ould."

"And you are not trifling with me now?"

"Tis far from my notion, Masther Neddy; I tell you over agin, that Miss Helen will be married next week, as sure as I won't; an' I'll give you my book oath, if you like, that I'd be long sorry to make such a fool o' myself."

"You startle me, Tom—frighten me terribly."

"I guessed that 'ud come to pass."

"And the bridegroom?"

"Do you remember Misther Dick Stanton, sir, that come home from America, just before you left us?"

"Yes—and is it he?"

"'Tis indeed—Misther Dick Stanton, that frolickin' young rogue."

"Phoh! phoh!" said Edmund, as if speaking to himself, "it can never be—Helen has never mentioned it in her letters—Phoh, Tom, impossible!"

"Well, have id your own way, Masther Neddy; but I hard th' ould lad swarin' oath upon oath, not a great many hours ago, up to Miss Helen's face, that she was to marry Misther Stanton, widin a week's time; an' ould Gaby isn't the boy to go out of his road, for any man born ov a woman—no, nor for any woman born of a woman neither; an' I just tell you that for your comfort, Masther Ned."

"Thank you, sir," said Edmund bowing to him.

"Kindly welcome, sir," answered Tom, bowing in return.

"But he cannot force his daughter to marry against her will?"

"Bud can't he force her into the sthreet, an' shet the dour in her face! Faith an' he can; an' 'tis himself is the very ould boy to do it."

"No, Tom, no. Helen shall not be forced."

"All very fine talk, 'pon my conscience."

"What do you say?"

"Don't get cross wid me now, Masther Ned, if you plase; sure it isn't me that's going to be married to Miss Helen?"

Edmund had been walking about the room, with bent brows, repeating his opinion that Helen should not be married against her will, and he scarcely heeded Tom.

"You'll be thryin' to put a bar to id, Masther Ned?"

"Trying?—I *will* put a bar to it."

"Would it be doin' any harm to ask how?"

"How, how—I cannot see that, yet; but I tell you that I *will* put a bar to it."

"Faith, an' fur all myself can see, you'd want some one, wid a little share of brains to help you. Is id a 'torney or a counsellor you're to be, Masther Ned, when your time is out?"

"Stop the marriage I will, were it by twisting the neck of that disgusting fool," continued Edmund, still only half attending to Tom, as he walked about.

"Faix, I wouldn't like to be in ais coat. Will you promise not to strike me fur what I'm goin' to say, sir?"

"Get out, you idiot!"

"Bud will you promise me?"

"Phoh! to be sure I will."

"You say Miss Helen isn't to be married next week?"

"She shall not, by—!"

"Well, an' that's a thumper iv an oath; I tell you what I'll do wid you. See here; there's two shillings—all I'm worth in money, on the face ov the livin' earth, afther comin' off of my long road this evenin'; they say you have a houseful ov ould goold; I'll lay these two shillings agen two ov your ould guineas, that Miss Helen will be married next week. Asy now, Masther Ned—don't be comin' so close to me, that-a-way. Sure you promised not to sthrike me?"

"Yes, but I did not promise that I would not take you neck and heels, and pitch you out of that window into the street."

"Faith, an' ov the two, myself 'ud rather be sthrudd dacently—keep off, sir, if you plase."

A servant entered the room with Edmund's dinner.

"Well, well, Tom, you may sit down yonder; and while I dine, we will talk more of this business."

But Edmund did not keep his word; he remained either quite taciturn, or, after attacking his food with every appearance of a ravenous appetite, pushed away his plate, and muttered to himself, not addressing a word to Tom Naddy. This did not answer either the purpose or the temperament of Tom. After glancing scrutinizingly around the nicely furnished apartment, he broke through a whistle so low, that it might be called a whispered whistle, and spoke, "Nate lodgins' intirely we're in here, Masther Neddy."

He got no answer. His next remark was:—"Why thin, may the saints rowl a blanket o' glory round the poor ould man that left us."

Ned understood the smothered slyness of Tom's allusion, and perplexed as he was, suddenly glanced at him and laughed.

"Well, Tom; and had you no business in Dublin, but to bring me this news?"

"What other business 'ud I have, sir?"

"Your young mistress sent you?"

"Never a send, thin."

"And you have a letter?" cried Edmund, starting up.

"No, I have not; an' no message either. An' not a word from the young mistress to you, good or bad."

"What! She would not write to me?"

"No; because she couldn't."

"Couldn't; why?"

Tom put his hand in his pocket, took out the key of his sleeping loft over his stable at home, and gave it a sudden twist, as if shooting a lock with it, accompanying the act by an explanatory nod of his head.

"What!" cried Edmund, understanding him, "have matters really grown so serious? And so, Tom, you have come to Dublin of your own accord?"

"O' my own accord."

"And the road so long! How did you travel? On the top of the coach?"

"Faix no, Masther Edmund; on the top o' shank's mare; walked id, or raced id, every inch o' the way; an' in the night time, as well as in the day time, more betoken."

The distance was upwards of sixty miles.

"Well, then, Tom, I see you are a faithful kind of fellow after all; and you shall have something to make up your road expenses, Tom."

"Never fear that—I'll have your two ould guineas honestly won, by my wager, as shure as little apples."

Edmund Fennell again began to look annoyed, and Tom thought dangerous.

"Stop now, Masther Ned. Whist, wid yourself, an' come here, as far from the dour as ever we can; would id be any harm to lock id? I won't spake another word till it is locked."

Edmund turned the key. In two hours afterwards, he and Tom Naddy were on the road from Dublin homeward, together.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE next day still, and we have returned with them to their native city.

Tom Naddy is re-installed in all his former offices in Gaby M'Neary's household, and enjoys something more of his master's favor than ever he did. With an unusual degree of interest, Gaby questioned Tom concerning his father's death, and Tom gave him a full account of the nature and suddenness of his fatal disorder—"a smotherin' up all over," he described it to have been; then of the wake, and then of the funeral, adding a list of how many little brothers and sisters were now left almost wholly dependent upon him "fur the bit an' the sup."

Edmund Fennell, not making his return known, even to Father Connell, hastened to Miss Lanigan's genteel little house. He had long been acquainted with her, had often met her at Gaby M'Neary's, and quite as often had met Helen M'Neary under her roof. Miss Lanigan received him, as was her wont, with great good-nature and sympathy. She either knew or guessed all the circumstances which caused his present unhappiness; nay, she could supply him with a few more, to add to his comfort, as Tom Naddy would remark. Helen had continued under lock and key, ever since her father had informed her that she should become the wife of Mr. Stanton. And the mantua-makers—she had it from themselves—were in and out every moment in the day, preparing her dresses for the awful occasion.

"But it is not possible," said Edmund, "that Helen ever will consent to marry that stolid fellow, in the teeth of her promises, often and often, and most solemnly repeated, in the presence of Heaven, to be mine—my own—oh, Miss Lanigan, you have yourself witnessed, over and over, the interchange of our vows to each other—can you do nothing now to assist us in keeping them unbroken?"

"I declare and protest, my dear, I am ready and willing to do anything—but I declare I do not see, for the present, what is to be done—"

"Miss Lanigan, I am distracted—and I shall act as a

desperate man, I fear, if some means are not devised to prevent a breach of Helen's engagements with me."

"I vow and protest, my dear, I sincerely sympathise with you, and commiserate you. You love, and are beloved—and the situation you are placed in, is most interesting and absorbing—and my poor Helen too! What must be her feelings?—

" 'With the man that I love, were I destined to dwell,
On a mountain, a moor, in a cot, in a cell,' "

I should think myself supremely happy. But still, I ask, what is to be done? I would not be for lacerating your tender feelings by rudely separating you. But be not over-hasty, my dear; you have still three or four days to consider; hope for the best—

" 'Hope, thou source of every blessing,
Parent of each joy divine.' "

Edmund Fennell suddenly interrupted the waving of her little hand by seizing it, and her quotation, by breaking in upon it, and speaking very rapidly.

"The case is this, Miss Lanigan. Helen M'Neary is mine, by every vow and pledge that could bind her to me—and if I had a thousand lives to lose, one after the other, I would lay them down, sooner than be separated from her—I am no blasphemer, but I deliberately swear, by—"

"Hush, dear youth!" interrupted Miss Lanigan in return, placing her disengaged hand on Edmund's lips—"be calm—swear not—neither scare me—by your terrible threats—gracious goodness me! what is to become of us all? I protest and vow—"

"Miss Lanigan, listen to me. There is one step, which if taken, would prevent all the misery that may otherwise happen; and you can, if you like, be mainly instrumental in causing that step to be taken."

"Goodness gracious, now! What step? What do you mean, my dear?"

"This—I mean this. You can persuade Helen to consent to a private marriage with me."

Miss Lanigan half screamed at the notion. "A clandestine engagement! And such an engagement!" No, no;

the thing was impossible ; it would be very sinful, and very wicked, and by no means respectable for her to have anything to do with such a matter. It would injure her character among her very numerous circle of friends, who were vieing with each other, every day in the year, to see which of them should have her oftenest amongst them. No, no, no ; much as she sympathised in the deep distress of her dear young friends, her interference was totally out of the question. Edmund entreated, raved, Miss Lanigan was positive. In fact, her little, genteel, worldly interests were touched, and that was enough. Miss Lanigan was an instance of a meagre affectation of romance, and solid selfishness, going hand in hand very comfortably together. Edmund now ran out of the house, muttering and threatening awfully.

At the end of the little street he encountered Tom Naddy.

"Have you a letter for me ?" asked Edmund.

Tom handed him one. He tore it open, and ran his eye over it.

"Tis all as I feared," he continued, "she refuses to entertain, for an instant, my proposal—Helen, I knew you would, though I am sure you love me."

"What luck had you wid the little eldherly lady in this street, Masther Edmund ?"

"No luck."

"Well, lave her to me. I'll make an offer at her, over again fur you. I'll be lookin' afther you in an hour or so, sir, wid better news fur you than you have fur me, may be."

And thrusting his right hand into the left sleeve of his jacket, and his left hand into its right sleeve, he shouldered onward very leisurely to Miss Lanigan's little green hall-door, whistling at every step he took—but indeed, not for want of thought.

CHAPTER XXVI.

It has been hinted that Miss Bessy Lanigan had achieved her present height of little, genteel popularity, in a great degree, by her amazing capacity for acquiring a knowledge of other people's affairs, and by her obliging readiness, in communicating that knowledge. She was a daily periodical of private anecdote, and her publication commenced about twenty minutes past seven in the morning, and did not quite end until about ten minutes to eleven every evening. How she acquired matter to fill herself with diurnal novelty, was wondrous. But she left no resource untried for the purpose. As her own editor and compiler, she was indeed individually a host; still, her contributors were almost beyond calculation, embracing every rank within her reach, down to the humblest servant, nay, to the very old beggarwoman or beggarman at her door, who came to get something from her, but were sent away, on the contrary, after giving to Miss Lanigan all they were worth in the world—their malice and their lies—without receiving in return, as much as a potato-peel, a crumb, or an empty marrow-bone.

And yet did they consider themselves repaid, starving though they might be. One of the quality had condescended to listen to their wretched gossip; and so they felt themselves of importance to society, and went on their way rejoicing.

With condescension indeed, nay, with familiarity, the little lady was necessarily obliged to reward all her humbler contributors, since stipends, alms, or bribes, she had not to give. And Tom Naddy, ever since he had become translated into Gaby M'Neary's service, cannot be supposed to have escaped Miss Lanigan's constant claims for contributions.

This day, having knocked at her little green hall-door, and sent up word that he was the bearer of a letter to Miss Lanigan, he was admitted to her presence without delay. The letter, he said, came from Miss M'Neary, through the medium of her own maid, and he was charged to use the greatest secrecy and punctuality in delivering it.

Miss Lanigan proceeded to read it. Poor Helen was in a terrible state of affliction. She had not stopped crying, nor slept a wink, since the evening of the fearful contention with her father. She felt greatly indignant at the tyrannical restraint set upon her; she did not know what to do—but trebly resolved she was, that no earthly power should ever make her wed Mr. Stanton; yet, how to avoid the calamity without incurring her father's utmost displeasure—perhaps his abandonment and his curse—she could not determine. She looked round on every side, but all was black and hopeless. Would not her dear Miss Lanigan assist her?—and again Helen asked for advice (while perhaps she despised the source from which it was to come).

Helen went on to say, that she had been startled that morning by a letter from—Miss Lanigan knew whom—written by him in the same town with her, and she had been more than startled by its purport. It proposed to her to take a step which it was impossible she ever could take. But would Miss Lanigan come to her father's house, and, as she was a favorite of his, would she try to gain his permission to see Helen, and then Miss Lanigan should know more?

Miss Lanigan paused in great perplexity over this epistle. She was aroused by a sort of groaning ejaculation, as if of utter despair, from Tom Naddy, who occupied the chair, which, as usual, his little editor had pointed out to him; and Tom looked, and had twisted his limbs, into an exceedingly woe-begone expression.

Miss Lanigan addressed him.

"Why, I protest and vow, my good boy, affairs seem to go on worse and worse with you at home."

"Worse an' worse, sure enough, Miss—an' worse nor that agin, if I'd say id. But what signifies the way things is now to the way they'll be in a little time, if matthers doesn't mend, Miss?"

"How so?"

"Why, Miss, there 'ull be slaughter an' destruction to no end, if Miss Helen marries Misther Stanton."

"Good gracious! Do *you* really think so, Tom?"

"Faix, Miss, I'm right down sure ov it. I know Masther Neddy well, ever since he was a weeny chap, an' look, Miss,

I wouldn't give that for Stanton's life, if id is a thing that he sets on taking Miss Helen from him."

Tom Naddy touched the tip of his tongue with the tip of his finger, and held out on the latter, for Miss Lanigan's inspection, the smallest possible portion of transparent saliva.

"I protest you frighten me, my good boy."

"An' no wondher—it frightens myself to think ov id. First an' foremost Masther Neddy will take Misther Stanton, an' he'll think no more of knockin' the daylight out ov him than I would ov puttin' my feet on a spider; fur the poor crature ov a young man is crazy mad this moment. Well, that's one life gone. Then surely he must get a blundherbuss an' shoot his own skull off, or else they'll take him up and hang him on the gallows for Misther Stanton's murther; and don't you think, Miss, that it 'ud be betther fur him, an' more genteeler, to kill his ownself than to lave id to the hangman to do? Don't you, Miss?"

"Oh, for gracious' sake, good boy, don't put such a shocking question to me. I protest and vow, I'm all in a tremble at the thought of such horrid doings."

"Well, that's two lives gone, widout any doubt on the face ov the earth. Then let Miss Helen get over id all if she can. I'll bet any sum she'll never see a happy day agen, an' that she'll dhrop into an airy grave. An' as for th'ould masther, I'll go bail, wid all his oaths, he'll be sorry enough whin he sees nothin' bud murther an' misfortun' on every side ov him. I'm only a poor boy, Miss, an' I'd go five hundred miles on my bare knees to stop that unloocky weddin' if I could. An' if there was any good crature that would be the manes ov stoppin' id, they might be sartin sure that a blessin' 'ud fall on 'em, every day they'd see the sun—och, it 'ud be a crown o' glory fur any one that 'ud do id!"

"But if old Mr. M'Neary is so very determined, I cannot see how the marriage is to be stopped."

"Very asy intirely, Miss, very asy intirely. It 'ud only be fur Miss Helen to give her consent to marry wid Masther Neddy, afore the day fur th' other unfortunate weddin' 'ud come round, an' then, sure all the mischief 'ud be hindered at once."

"Miss Helen will never consent to any such thing. I know well she will not. Besides, you don't think of old Mr. M'Neary, young man—no person could withstand his fury."

"Bud what could his fury do afther all, Miss? Maybe he'd part wid Miss Helen fur a start—bud sure Masther Neddy has plenty to keep her like any lady in the land. Why, a body might say, to be sure, that id wasn't a right way to have the young lady married—but wouldn't it be betther nor murder an' slaughter? An' th' ould masther 'ud cotton to both ov 'em afther a while, an' thin there 'ud be nothin' bud blessins an' happiness every day in the year—an' thin, wouldn't the loocky body that brought it all about be made much of—och, wouldn't she?"

"I protest and vow—" began Miss Lanigan, and she paused.

"An' do you know what, Miss?"

"Well, Tom, what?"

"Misther Stanton wouldn't fret very long, I can tell you."

"What! Is he not most tenderly attached to Miss M'Neary, poor man?"

"By my faix, Miss, he'd be more vexed to have his queue made crooked, than to lose two Miss M'Nearys. I have id from his own mouth, Miss."

"Gracious goodness me! Do you tell me so, Tom?"

"'Tom,' says he to me, t'other day, 'Tom, my honest lad,' says he—I was puttin' the queue straight fur him at the same time—'Tom,' says he, 'your young mistress is a very nice, genteel young lady; bud, Tom,' says he ag'n, 'I wouldn't care much, even if she broke wid me; fur I think I can get another young lady as nice, an' as genteel as she is. I'm not lookin' afther money, fur I've plenty of that; a nice, genteel, young lady is all I want; an' don't you think, Tom,' says poor Misther Stanton to me, 'don't you think, Tom, I'd be able to get another nice, genteel, young lady, if anything happened to prevent the match wid Miss Helen?' 'Be my faix, an' sure you could, sir,' says I; 'sure you're a match fur the best among 'em'—an' so he is, Miss; a quiet, paceable gentleman, an' very well to look at, an' I don't think he'd say *hooome* or *hawm* to vex a lady fur his whole life long—what do you think, Miss?"

"Indeed, Tom, I do think Mr. Stanton very likely to meet a favorable reception from a great many ladies."

"See now! Didn't I know that?"

"Well, and what else did he say to you, Tom?"

"He's no way proud, Miss; proud gentlemen or ladies, that wouldn't talk free wid a poor body, they're not the right sort afther all; 'tis upstarts, an' cratures ov the kind, that snubs us poor people; rael gentlemen an' ladies are civil an' conversible, an' don't turn a snout on them that's below 'em—is not that your opinion, Miss?"

"Yes, indeed, Tom: and you may see that I am chatting very freely with you."

"Blessins on your purty face, Miss, sure enough you are; well thin, an' Misther Stanton isn't a bit prouder nor you are; an' he made as free wid me, as if I was one of his own sort, afther a manner—'Tom,' says he, 'I like Miss Helen very well intirely, an' I'm in a chokin' hurry to be married to her; bud,' says he, 'the ould gentleman is an oddity. If he houlds on, I'll hould on too, bud he may turn short on me, Tom,—I'd give a purse o' goold that he did, Miss, bud there's no chance o' that—he might turn short on me, Tom; an' if he did, I think I'd get as nice, an' as genteel a young lady as ever she was—particularly whin 'tisn't the money I want.' 'Tis you that would, sir,' says I;—'Tom,' says he, over agen, 'I think you're not a bad judge of young ladies,'—wasn't that very free of him to say to me, Miss?"

"He paid you a very high compliment, I vow and protest, Tem."

"'You're not a bad judge of young ladies,' says he. 'Why, sir,' says I, 'I'd make a guess that way.'"

"My goodness, gracious! And pray, Tom, by what rule would you form your judgment of young ladies?"

"Did you ever hear of the rule of thumb, Miss?"

"Never, I protest."

"'Tis by that rule that botches ov carpenthers work, Miss; but that's not my rule, Miss; 'tis by the eyes I go, like a fellow that sarved his time; I think 'tis a gift to me someway; an' I'll tell you, Miss, the two handsomest young ladies to be met, from the Butt's cross to Ballyvough, an, thin you'll know, Miss, if I'm to be depinded on."

"Do, then, Tom—let me hear, for goodness gracious' sake."

"The young misthress, Miss Helen M'Neary, is one ov them, Miss ; an' sure I needn't only turn my eyes across the room to find another young lady who could walk by Miss Helen's side every day in the year."

"Oh, Tom Naddy, my good lad ; you can flatter, I see."

"That I may never rise from the sate I'm on, Miss, if what I'm afther sayin' isn't the very thing I'd swear on the book, this moment." (Mental reservation on Tom's part.)

"Indeed, Tom, I cannot but be obliged to you," said Miss Lanigan, as she fixed her smug features into the most amiable expression, bobbed her little head, and "bridled," as it was then termed. "I do declare, Tom, you know how to be gallant."

"Och, it's little I know about that fine word, Miss ; bud sure, I have an eye in my head. Well, Miss, as we war sayin'—poor Misther Stanton, as nate a gentleman as ever cum across me—says he to myself, 'I think you're not a bad judge ov young ladies ;' 'I'd make a guess that way, sir,' says I ; 'then, Tom,' says he, an' he shuck me bee the fist—savin' manners—'Tom,' says he 'if anything happens to break the match between meself and Miss Helen MacNeary, you'll be on the lookout fur me, Tom ; I know you're a judge, Tom, an' I think, Tom, that I'd agree in your choice, Tom ;' wasn't that makin' very free intirely, Miss ?"

"Ha, ha ! dear me," and Miss Lanigan again hesitated.

Tom examined her face, and was not slow to perceive that he had produced an effect. She was measuring at once Tom's opinion of her attractions, and Tom's power and authority of selection for Mr. Stanton, while a fitting vision of escaping from her state of little gentility, and wretched singleness, into the wide expanse of wealth, and of married importance, plainly irradiated it.

"The greatest fault, or my be 'tis his misfortune, Miss, that Misther Stanton has—"

Miss Bessy Lanigan started from her reverie. She had just dressed Mr. Stanton with all the amiabilities that could adorn his sex, and Tom Naddy hinted at a fault.

'Mr. Stanton's fault, my good boy ?' she asked, feelingly.

"Bee my faix, Miss, I don't see a fault, to call id a fault,

about the good gentleman, only he's not—a-a—when—he's not—" and Tom polished the crown of his hat with the sleeve of his coat—"he's not over-handy at coortin', Miss; an' so, he'd lave id to another, you know, to manage points for him."

"Is that all, Tom? And he has no other faults, you think?"

"Avock, not he, the nice young gentleman—an' a lady might turn him round her little finger, Miss."

"That's no fault, indeed, Tom; your very presuming, forward young men, Tom, make too free; and after all, when the novel charms of Hymen wear away, they cease to study what will please."

"Oh, likely enough, faix, Miss, fur what I know ov the matther: but if I was a nice, handsome young lady, like you, Miss, I'd never go beyond Misther Stanton—that is, supposin' I was in the marryin' way, Miss—which they say you are not, Miss."

The interview and conversation might be prolonged considerably, but it will be enough to say that Tom Naddy and Miss Bessy Lanigan parted upon the understanding, expressed or implied, that he was to use all his powers of intrigue and authority, to promote her to the station of Mistress Richard Stanton, provided she would, beforehand, prevail on Miss Helen M'Neary, to agree to marry Edmund Fennell privately—first of all, going at once to Gaby M'Neary's house, and gaining an interview with Helen, in furtherance of the project.

Tom next kept his appointment with Edmund. His success with Miss Bessy Lanigan, astonished, though it delighted the young man. The next question was, what priest could be got to celebrate the private marriage?

"Father Connell, surely," said Tom, "an' you must go at once to him yourself, Masther Neddy."

Edmund was disinclined to go. He almost feared to approach his old protector, and still, his most respected and beloved old friend, on such a mission, particularly, as he had, without consulting him, come down from Dublin, to the interruption of his studies there; and remained so long in his native town, without calling upon his old priest.

But Tom Naddy insisted upon his going instantly. He would again meet Edmund, in a more convenient place, to

learn the result. Tom now seemed quietly to claim, from all parties concerned, full obedience to his commands, and by none was he eventually contradicted.

Edmund accordingly proceeded to speed his ungracious task. He returned to Tom Naddy, and informed him that there was no hope. Father Connell had been more displeased with him than even he had anticipated. As Edmund foresaw, he had severely chided his return from Dublin without consulting him, and the want of confidence in not immediately referring to himself for advice, especially offended the old priest. As to his officiating in the private marriage, he altogether repudiated the idea.

"Well," said Tom Naddy, very thoughtfully, "I'll thry his poor Rivirence fur you too, Masther Neddy, tho' faix I'm more, more afeard nor yourself was, a little while ago."

CHAPTER XXVII

"This is a world of sin, O Lord! And your patience is great with the sinners of it! Your mercy exceeds your justice, O Lord!"

Thus ejaculated Father Connell, as with his hands clasped within each other, and his eyes reverently, and most sorrowfully turned upwards, he walked quickly about his little parlor.

Suddenly he stopped, and looked on our friend, Tom Naddy, whose effrontery, thorough as it was, could scarcely withstand the effects produced upon his old master, by the atrocious lie he had just uttered to him.

"And he told you this, Tom, of his own accord, and with his own lips?" questioned the priest.

"He did, your Reverence." Tom swallowed half of this repetition of the monstrous falsehood; "he was afeard of sayin' id to your own face, whin he came here a little while ago; bud he tould id to me, that I might tell id to you—that is, I believe, an' I'm sure, that he wanted me to

tell id to you, tho' he didn't lay his commands on me, out an' out."

"Oh! oh! Lord have mercy on us, and guard us from evil!" moaned Father Connell, resuming his hasty walk up and down the apartment.

"I have hope, sir, that you won't be angry wid me for comin' to tell you?" questioned Tom, now shedding some real tears; for every moment he grew more and more afraid of the desperate course he had taken.

"No, Tom, no, I am not angry with you; on the contrary, I consider when you do not publish your neighbor's fault, for the purpose of exposing him to the world, but rather, with the intention of curbing him in his sinful career, you perform an act of praiseworthy Christian charity."

The hardened diplomatist winced to the very quick under this most unmerited praise.

"I have been a father to that boy, Tom," and here the old man's voice gave way; he clasped his hands more earnestly than before, and tears stole down his cheeks—"if he had been my own son, I could not have more truly loved him; and now, to repay me in this way—to repay me by outraging, in the most serious manner, the laws of that God whom I thought I had taught him to obey—oh, it is very sorrowful for my grey heirs; very, very sorrowful."

If ever liar was punished for his lie, almost in the very utterance of it, Tom Naddy was now that liar. All the acquired crookedness of his mind, and all the pleasures resulting from an indulgence in it, yielded to a momentary exercise of his natural straightness of heart. The grief, which he had wantonly inflicted on the reverend and aged man before him, became inflicted on himself; and he mentally resolved, never to tell another lie during his life.

"And," continued Father Connell, after another pause of abstraction—"not to talk of Edmund Fennell, I had a love for that unfortunate young lady, too. When Neddy was a poor, deserted, small boy, and when I went out to beg for him, she was a beautiful and a delightful little creature; I give you my word, Tom Naddy, she bestowed on me her Christmas-box—half a golden guinea—her little

hoard, that she had reserved for buying toys—to relieve him and his poor mother; yes, I loved Neddy Fennell, and I loved that beautiful little child; but both of them, Tom Naddy, my good boy, have taught me that the purest affections of this sinful, ugly world, are good for nothing—are good for nothing—nothing; the Lord be praised! And the Lord grant me strength to bear it, as I ought!" but, notwithstanding his endeavors at Christian resignation, Father Connell's affliction of spirit increased, and he wept plentifully.

As soon as he could speak, he resumed.

"But God help them; God help them, poor, sinful children; they have not, by their sinfulness, brought happiness to themselves, no more than to me; God help them!"

There was another pause, and he spoke again.

"Tom Naddy, my very good boy, it is not my opinion that Neddy Fennell will oppose himself to his old priest, and—as I may call myself, without much boasting—to his old benefactor. No, Tom, I do not think he will oppose himself to me, when I warn him, and caution him, and beg of him, with tears in my eyes, to abandon his great sin—will he, Tom? Do you think he will?"

"In truth, sir, I'm very sure he won't."

"Well then, Tom, send him to me; perhaps he will be afraid or loath to come; but tell him from me, that if he is only very sorry, I will not be hard or stern with him; tell him that the Lord of heaven and earth is never harsh with repenting sinners; and that I, the Lord's poor priest, and lowliest servant, will not be more severe than his Master and mine. Send him to me, Tom, send him to me."

"I will, sir. But, sir—"

"Well, Tom, my good boy?"

"I may be spakin' wrong, sir; but what is to become of poor Miss Helen?"

The old man started.

"That is true, Tom, and very true. Edmund Fennell is bound before God and man, to repair the misfortune he has caused. And that dear, tender-hearted child, is she to be abandoned to the world's scorn, and to the danger of continued offences, towards her Almighty maker? Sit you

there, Tom, my good boy, till I come back to you, I will go up-stairs to my own room for a while."

He left the little parlor, and Tom Naddy could hear him ascend the creaking old stairs, and then fall suddenly on his knees in his bed-room.

Naddy remained very uncomfortable, during the considerable time he was absent. The solemnity of the priest's actions and manner, his deep sensibility, upon which the liar had not calculated, awed and dismayed him. The fear of detection, too, either by Edmund Fennell or Father Connell, broke suddenly, for the first time, upon him, and he began to be really terrified. And yet did Tom endeavor to regain his equilibrium, by assuring himself that he was "doing everything for the best," and that but for him very dire mishaps must certainly occur.

Father Connell reappeared before him; there was now a fixed seriousness and a determination on the old gentleman's face.

"I have thought over this unfortunate business, Tom Naddy," he said, "as carefully and as diligently as I was capable of, with, I hope, sincere prayer to assist me; and it appears to me that there is nothing to save these two unhappy young creatures, except a very extreme step. And there is great danger to all parties in such a measure. But worldly considerations are not to be kept in mind when our duty to God and our neighbor is to be performed. He was here himself, a while ago, to ask me to marry him privately to Helen M'Neary. But he did not place before me the real grounds for his request, and thinking him only influenced by youthful inclination—and I feared, selfish inclination—and feeling that I had no authority, on such a plea, to outrage the feelings of the young girl's father, and his good friend, and mine, Tom—and at the same time to offend the law of the land, I refused his application. But now the case is altered, terribly altered. Go to Edmund Fennell, and tell him, from me, to come here this evening, with his poor partner in error, and I will marry him to her."

"God bless your Reverence, an' I'll tell him so; bud he's very much in awe ov you, an' no wonther—"

"If he had been in awe of me, Tom Naddy, he would not have risen up against me in the strength of this heavy sin;

or, if he had loved me, he would not have wrung my old heart, by showing to me that all my care for him was sown in an ungrateful soil."

"Bud I know he'd be in awe ov you another way, sir."

"How so, my good boy, Tom?"

"I'll go bail that when he comes he'd be denyin' everything, to save himself from your anger, sir."

"Well; and it is likely enough that he may endeavor to impose on me. One sin brings on many. But I will not, for the present, tempt him to add falsehood to his other transgressions. I will not, for the present, even listen to any of his denials. I will stop his speech the moment he attempts them. But he shall not, therefore, escape me without making the first atonement he can make for his offence against God and man. Go now, Tom, and deliver my message to him."

"An' I will, sir, an' wid all my heart. But sir, there is one other little thing you won't be angry wid me fur sayin'. If ever he comes to know who it was that tould on him, sir, you know I couldn't stand the counthry agen him, sir."

"Have no fears on that head, Tom. He shall never know from me the name of my informant, though I have hopes, under God's blessing, that at a future day he will become his own accuser, and admit everything to me. Go now, Tom, at once, and tell him to be here this evening, and I will marry him."

Tom did go at once; and for the first time in his life he did not whistle as he went. Nor was his usual lazy, lounging gait that in which he now made way. In fact, he raced along the streets at his utmost speed, as if he would leave behind him something of which he was very much in dread, although they were only his own almost palpable misgivings, fears, and regrets, that pressed close to his heels, like a pack of little cur-dogs, yelping and snarling, and occasionally biting him—at all events driving him furiously forward.

Edmund Fennell did not know him, as he approached their appointed place of meeting, so very much changed was his whole expression, indeed, as well as action. Coming near, however, Tom was soon recognizable.

"Well, Tom?" questioned Edmund, as much out of

breath from impatience as was his ambassador from speed.

"Well, Masther Neddy. Faix, an' it's well it is, sure enough; very well intirely fur *you*; bud fur other poor people that you get to put themselves into such scrapes, it's anything bud well, I'm thinkin'."

"Why, what's the matter? What's the answer? Does he consent?"

"Arrah, to be sure he does, sir. Go to him this evenin', wid Miss Helen, an' he'll marry you to your heart's content; bud see here, Masther Neddy—from this moment, I wash my hands ov all your plottin', schamin' ways; an' good-bye to you now; it's too long I'm from home—an' I suppose there's somethin' else mighty pleasant waitin' there fur me, on your account; good-bye to you, Masther Neddy."

Edmund seized him by the collar, as he was darting off, and shaking him heartily, said:—

"What is the matter with you, yon incomprehensible fellow? Have you gone mad? Give me the answer, from Father Connell, clearly and coolly, or I'll—"

"An' havn't you id already, sir? What do you mane by me, at all? Let me be off home—th' ould priest bid me tell you to come up wid her this evenin', and he'll settle your points fur you. What more can I say?—Thundher-an-turf, let me go! May I die in sin, if I ever say a word more, now or fur ever, amin, on the unlOCKY subject. Take your hand o' me, sir!"

"Away then!" and Edmund let him bound off, as a hound out of the leash.

"One of his periodical visitations, with very, very long intervals between," said Edmund to himself, "but I know I can depend upon his information; and so be thou, Miss Bessy Lanigan, as fortunate with Helen as this mysterious rascal has been with Father Connell—nay, even with yourself—and I am the happiest of the happy, for ever!"

But Edmund was not, after all, about to take the true road to happiness.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

SINCE Tom Naddy's boyish days, when, it will be recollected, he got Ned Fennell into trouble, on the score of a certain letter, Father Connell had found him attentive, faithful, honest, and seemingly religious, and, therefore, placed full reliance in Tom. All doubt of his want of truth left the good man's mind; and he had consequently received his late communications with implicit faith. Indeed, such was Father Connell's virtuous and primitive character, that he could not even suspect dissimulation in any one whom he once trusted. And these facts, joined with Tom's inimitable plausibility of speech and manner, ensured success to him on the present occasion.

Shortly after nightfall, on that day, three persons, silently ushered in by Mrs. Molloy, entered the priest's parlor. They were Edmund Fennell, Helen M'Neary, and Miss Bessy Lanigan.

Even under the circumstances, and with the accompaniments, which attend a marriage celebrated in the more usual way—amidst the blessings of parents—crowds of friends—publicity and banquetting—there is something of doubt, of awe, of uncertainty for the future, which oppresses, even unto sorrow, a right-minded and pure-hearted girl.

But much more than this Helen M'Neary must have felt, in her present situation. She had stolen through the gloom of the evening, and in disguise, to vow her marriage vow, under the ministry of a clergyman, not of her own religious creed. Excepting her future husband, she came supported but by one friend, and that one an individual for whom she had but little respect. No father stood by her side, to give her away and to bless her—she feared that she was about to cause him to curse her—she wore no bridal ornaments nor robe; and her single bridesmaid was in a similar predicament. All this had a most depressing effect upon her spirits. But there was much more to weigh her down. She now felt that she had consented to this private marriage hastily, and more in anger against her father's peremptory measures than—notwithstanding her love for

Edmund Fennell—in a conviction of its absolute necessity, or even of the force of the arguments which had been used to persuade her to the step ; and altogether, upon entering the priest's humble little house, she experienced a sense of unmaidenly impropriety, that sunk her in her own estimation, and a terror of future consequences, which made her heart sick.

She crossed the threshold of the priest's parlor door. He sat alone to a little table, stern, sorrowful, cheerless ; the ray of his single economical candle was cheerless too. His eye met Helen's ; there was something in it which made her tremble. Father Connell merely bowed his head to his breast, as the party one and all saluted him. Edmund felt his bride hang heavier upon his arm.

And Edmund became almost as much agitated as was Helen. He knew his old benefactor well, and he felt certain that this cold silence, so different from Father Connell's usual cheeriness of manner, betokened anything but approval of the marriage which was about to ensue.

Slowly rising, after he had lowered his head, the priest motioned them to sit down. He then bent his knees on the chair from which he had arisen, covered his face with his hands, and apparently prayed. Perhaps he detected himself in a greater show of harshness, towards the poor young couple, than he had promised them, and that a portion of his prayers petitioned for grace to bear with them, more like a Christian. After some time, he stood up again, put on his stole, and turning over the leaves of his missal, he fixed his eyes on the little group, and said, in a sad and solemn tone—"Come forward—I am ready."

Edmund and Miss Lanigan immediately rose, but Helen remained sitting. Edmund held out his arm to her. She made one or two unavailing efforts to take it.

"Why do you not come forward?" inquired the old priest.

Edmund answered, in a whisper, and with a choking throat, "Miss M'Neary is not very well, sir ; but she will recover soon—she has fainted, sir."

Father Connell almost ran across the room ; he saw the fair young girl insensible and helpless ; he saw her usually brilliant cheek pale as paper ; his sternness vanished in an instant, his features relaxed into a benign expression of

compassion and anxiety, and he took in his one of her cold, deadened hands, and chafed it eagerly.

"God bless you, God bless you, my poor child," he murmured in tones of shivering tenderness.

Helen M'Neary stirred, sighed, looked up into his face, let fall her forehead on his hand, and burst into agonies of tears.

"Don't—don't cry, my poor child; God is good, and he will give you grace, and strength, and repentance; put your trust in the Lord, my dear child, and he will support you. Peggy! Peggy!" he cried out, in his loudest voice.

Peggy, who was quite within hail, was very soon at her master's elbow.

"Peggy, this poor, dear little child, this good, charitable little girl, is very ill and weakly—Peggy, you know what would be good for her, better than I do—Peggy," he added in a whisper, "don't you think a glass of wine would do her good? I think it would, Peggy."

"Why thin, what else in the world wide, would do her half so much good?" questioned Peggy, dogmatically.

"I am much recovered now, sir," said Helen M'Neary, once more looking up, with streaming eyes, into his face.

"Oh, you will be better, my dear, you will be better. Peggy, go into the closet," he pointed to one in which the wine for the altar was kept—"I know there is some wine on the shelf: bring it here quickly."

Peggy soon obeyed his commands; her coarse exterior covered a tender heart—provided always that Peggy was allowed her own method of indulging its impulses. Under her soothing attentions, Helen gradually grew stronger and more collected.

Father Connell regained the further side of the room. Under the influence of this accidental appeal to his compassion, scarce a trait of his severity of manner remained. And as soon as Helen was quite able to engage in the ceremony, she and Edmund Fennell were, by his ministry, united as husband and wife, "to have and to hold," until death. Peggy was allowed to be a witness on the occasion; and it was with the heartiest good will, that she saw "her own dear boy," married to so lovely a partner for life.

Upon Peggy's hasty entrance into the parlor, she had left the door open; from the position, in which Edmund

and Helen stood up to the ceremony, they could see out through it, into the almost perfectly dark hall. The priest had scarcely ended his official duties, when Helen fancied she descried, leaning against the wall of the hall, a female figure. Starting back, and glancing again, she became sure that a living thing did flit away, through the darkness, out of view. The next moment, from some place in the house, more distant than the hall, the low, and seemingly smothered wailing of a young, and very musical voice, was heard, accompanied by a slight noise, as if of gentle clapping of hands. Father Connell looked at Peggy, somewhat reprehensively, and Peggy looked at him deprecatingly; and then she left the room, now carefully closing the door after her. The next moment, the low wailing, with its accompaniment, were heard no longer. Helen wondered, and even vaguely feared something, but made no inquiries of any one.

This little incident scarcely occupied as much time, as could cause any interruption to the business going on. Father Connell now turned to Edmund.

"Edmund Fennell," he said, "these ladies, your wife, and her friend, will pardon us, if we leave them together, for a moment. Come you with me. I wish to hold some conversation with you. Follow me."

Edmund accordingly walked after the old clergyman, up to his bedroom;—the little parlor was the only reception room in the house.

"Sit down there, Neddy Fennell;" Father Connell pointed to a chair, while he fastened the door. He then paced for a considerable time up and down, and at length spoke again.

"Neddy Fennell, I have brought you here, to hold some very serious discourse with you. I have brought you here, to try if the words of your old friend, and your old priest, will have any weight with you. Will you be attentive to me, Neddy Fennell?"

"I will, sir—thoroughly and reverently attentive."

"Well! And you must make me a promise, beforehand, Neddy Fennell. You must promise me that you will not even attempt to reply to anything I shall say, unless I require an answer to a question."

"Anything that you point out, sir, I will obey."

That is not a distinct answer to my distinct proposition. You are to promise, that you will not reply to my words—that you are to remain perfectly silent—unless I ask you a question—do you promise that?”

“I do, sir.”

“Neddy Fennell, I have been a friend to you, because I loved you. From your infancy I loved you; from the very first day that you came to give your childish assistance at the altar of God, I loved you. A change came over your life, even while you were yet a child, and you wanted a hand to be held out to you, and my hand was so held out to you;—and I do not now mention these things through vain-glory—God forbid I did—but from the necessity of the case before us.

“And I tried to do you more good, much more good than this. By precepts, and I humbly hope by example, I tried to fill your heart with the fear and the love of God. But I did not expect that you were to pay me back my love of you, and my care for you, with money or with worldly goods; I will tell you, however, what I did expect. I did expect and believe, that you would have shown your sense of thankfulness to me, by honoring and serving the Lord. Neddy Fennell, you have disappointed me; sorely disappointed me, and sorely, sorely afflicted me.”

“Gracious Heavens, sir!—I—”

“Remember your promise, and listen to me, Neddy Fennell,” Father Connell raised his finger, and frowned on the young man. “Neddy Fennell, you have sinned a great sin.”

“Father Connell! hear me, sir!”

“Silence, you Edmund Fennell! and again remember your promise—remember it literally. I will not hear you at present; at a future time I will. It is now your duty to attend to my counsel, and to let me gain a future hope for you, by witnessing your docility, and your humility under your priest’s reproof.

“The only recompense, Neddy Fennell, I will ever ask, or receive from you, for my love to you your whole life long, is your solemn resolution, to avoid, from this day forward, future sin; and to keep that resolution, and to be sorry, and to repent for the past—be silent, I command you once more, or I must think that you are impatient of

your old priest's rebuke, and that would be a bad sign indeed.

"You are now, though a very young man, a married man. No matter what may have occurred up to this moment, you are bound to love and cherish your wife; to love her above all, except your God; to be faithful and true to her; to cherish her beyond yourself, or the whole world besides;—you solemnly engage to do this, with God's assistance?"

"With God's assistance, sir, I most solemnly engage to do this."

"I hope you will; nay, I almost—I quite believe you will, and indeed, indeed, I will pray that you may obtain the grace to do so. Neddy Fennell, up to this very moment, I love you; and I have just proved it to you. Answer me this question, and answer it truly. When you came here this evening, had you any knowledge of the danger that I should run, in marrying you to that poor child? Answer me this truly, as if you were replying at the judgment-seat."

"I solemnly protest, sir, as if I were answering at the judgment-seat, that I did not know you must incur any danger, by uniting us in marriage."

"And, Neddy, notwithstanding all that has passed, I believe what you now say. I do not think you would willingly subject your old friend, and your priest, to the peril in which I have voluntarily placed myself. For, Neddy, I have, this night, subjected myself to a felon's punishment for your sake, and, as I said before, out of my love for you. To save you from continued sin, I have married you to a Protestant; and if, for doing this, I be prosecuted and convicted, the law of the land will send me, a banished felon, from this country. Its punishment for my act is, transportation beyond the seas for life."

"Merciful powers!" cried Edmund, starting up, "why was I ignorant of this law? Oh, my dear, my beloved, and venerated father, I knew not what I was doing!"

"I have told you, Neddy Fennell, that I believed your former assertion on the point. And yet, with my eyes open, I did this for you, and you cannot, therefore, doubt that I love you still. Now, attend to me again.

"I have loved you ever since you were a little child—I

have proved that I love you yet. You have been criminal—repent, amend, atone. Above all things, mark my words; take your wife to your bosom; cast no word of reproach or slight upon her; be unto her true, loving, tender, and cherishing; if you wish to show me that you are grateful, this is the gratitude I look for. Lead a good life, and let your wife find in you a Christian husband. As you hope for a future blessing, and if you value my death-bed prayers, do all this, my son."

Ned Fennell threw himself on his knees before the old man, clasping both his hands together.

"Just as you now are," said Father Connell, holding his right arm on high, "just as you now are, renew the promise before Heaven and me."

"Before Heaven, and before you, sir, I renew the promise to do all this."

"Well. Rise now." The priest offered him his hand, and as he obeyed, gave it one of the old squeezes to which it was so well accustomed. Still, however, he was grave and reserved, though not severely so.

"And, Neddy Fennell, we will now go down stairs, and you will take your wife to you and comfort her, and love her. You must call to see me to-morrow, that we may confer on your future plans; and how far this circumstance may have to do with them. I fear that it will have a great deal to do with them. But we will hope for the best. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof."

He led Edmund by the hand to his bride. The young couple, with their friend, arose to depart. He accompanied them to the outer door of his little premises, and there, before bidding them good-night, gave them anew his hearty and affectionate benediction.

CHAPTER XXIX.

On the night of the fire in Nick M'Grath's hay-loft, and previous to that occurrence, it will be brought to mind, that after his interview with the beggar-girl in Joan Fla-

herty's house, Edmund Fennell paid a visit, on her account, to Father Connell. He communicated to the old man all he knew concerning her. He described the shocking outrages, which, to his own knowledge, she constantly endured from Robin Costigan; fully detailing the scene he had witnessed from the top of the dividing wall, when he was a little boy, and an inmate of Nelly Carty's cabin. He dwelt on the poor girl's terror of the old beggarman; her tears and wailings; her rooted dislike of the life she was leading under his rule; her wish to change that life, and escape from Costigan; and her ever-recurring dread, that if she attempted to do so, her fearful tyrant would inevitably track her out, and kill her. He reminded the priest of her utter ignorance of religion, a fact which Father Connell himself had ascertained; but enlarged on her religious tendencies, notwithstanding, discoverable in her hatred of what was bad: her sympathy with what was good and generous; her appreciation of a charitable act; and her meek submission under cruel persecution.

Passing from his boyish, almost childish acquaintance with poor Mary, Edmund then took up an account of their re-meeting, after an interval of so many years, in Nick M'Grath's shop that very evening. He proceeded with their conversation in one of the shower of houses. Father Connell, struck with a new interest, although he had been sufficiently interested before, drew from Edmund, by continued questions, a very minute statement of this interview; not only as to what was said during it, but also as to what had occurred between the two young people. The lad could not help blushing, but he was perfectly able to meet every inquiry with the consistency of fearless truth. His old protector proposed other questions, and he also met them to the priest's satisfaction. It could not be denied, he admitted, that the poor, untaught young girl, regarded him with feelings that would have been improper, if indulged, as she seemed to indulge them, by any person at all instructed on moral, social, or religious points; but Edmund submitted that from the whole experience of her young life, it was impossible she could ever have been taught the impropriety of giving way to such feelings; indeed, her very avowals of them, open and ingenuous as they were, proved as much; and did they not also prove

another thing? Did they not also prove, that she herself did not know the tendency, the range, the very nature of all that she now vaguely and incipiently felt.

Father Connell laid his hand on Edmund's shoulder, and smiling benignly, nodded to him at once an assent to his proposition and an encouragement to go on.

Availing himself of the permission, Edmund proceeded to relate, how, according to Mary's own account, she still suffered from the gross and brutal treatment of Costigan; how her aversion to her present course had even increased since Edmund and she last met, but how, at the same time, her fear of being murdered by Costigan bound her to it. He turned to her aspirations after a good and virtuous life; to the truth of her sentiments towards all, in outward nature, from which she had had an opportunity of studying a good lesson; to the gifted order of her mind, evident through all the clouds of neglect, and of youthful sorrow which hung around it. He ventured to allude to the great beauty of her person and features; nor was his old listener displeased with the allusion; for beauty of heart has a certain pure and holy sympathy, even in the breast of well-disciplined old age, with outward personal beauty in youth; and Edmund, waxing eloquent, concluded, by asking Father Connell to decide whether it would not be a charitable and a delightful action to rescue, for society and for God, a creature like Mary Cooney, by snatching her from the power of Robin Costigan, from his murderous threats, and his probable execution of them; and from his evil ways and bad example, a continuance in, and observation of which, might, notwithstanding her present dispositions, end in her moral ruin.

"I will ask you only one question more, Neddy Fennell, my child," said Father Connell; "and you will answer that question truly—I know you will, Neddy."

"I will, sir."

"I know very well you will, Neddy. What are your own feelings towards this poor, young creature?"

"I pity her from my heart, sir; I have a great respect and regard for her keeping herself so long good, in the midst of wicked example; I have a great interest in her future well-doing; and I feel towards her, short as our

acquaintance has been, the full friendship that a brother feels for a sister."

"And you have no other feelings for her?"

"None, sir."

"Then, Neddy, my child, she shall indeed, with God's blessing, be saved from Robin Costigan's hand. He shall not kill either her body or her soul; no, Neddy, that wicked man shall not. I will take her from him. Under this poor roof she shall have an opportunity, at least, of growing to be a good woman, and a useful woman, and a faithful servant of the Lord. I will go this very evening and take her from Robin Costigan; ay, and I'll make him give her up to me, without a word. I am not afraid of the bad man, Neddy; no, I am not afraid of him, Neddy, my good child. And go you home, now, Neddy, to your business for the night; go you home to your good old master's house; and go straight home to it. And may you have a reward, Neddy, for your charitable and for your virtuous intentions towards that poor, uninstructed, unbefriended orphan child. Good-night, Neddy, and take my blessing. I will see Mary Cooney this very evening."

But Father Connell was detained at home by a visitor, on business of a most urgent nature, too long to perform his promise. Indeed it was much past his usual hour for retiring to bed, when the person went away. Some time after, the fire-bell struck on his ear. He hurried into the town with strong fears, as has been seen, for Ned Fennell; and all that he did subsequently is also known. In the first early light of the morning he led the poor beggar-girl home.

His house-keeper, Mrs. Molloy, had not been left quite unacquainted with his intentions towards Mary Cooney. In fact, it was the housekeeper's opinion that Father Connell had consulted her, very confidentially, on the matter; nay, in order to reconcile her to the introduction of a new inmate into her establishment, that he had made a very powerful appeal to her feelings; and this, even Mrs. Molloy's sense of her own respectability could not withstand. She was, therefore, prepared to receive poor Mary with something akin to graciousness of manner.

At Mrs. Molloy's kitchen fire, then, Mary was soon sitting, bareheaded, barefooted, and otherwise half clothed;

the scraps of attire which she did wear being wet, from the inclemency of the day before ; while her little feet were splashed with puddle, and blood-stained, too, from the bleeding of sore cracks and wounds in them.

Tears were in her eyes, smiles were on her lips, and short, happy sighs fluttered every moment, like so many small birds let loose one after the other, from the depths of her heart. She looked around her, scanning the humble little kitchen ; it was a drawing-room to her ; never in her life before had she sat to such a fire, nor in an apartment half so luxurious—so sumptuous. She looked at Mrs. Molloy, and at her high-heeled shoes and at her high-cauled cap, and deemed her a person of very great importance ; and Mrs. Molloy was not slow in observing the effect her superiority had produced ; and thus Mary was all the better of her mute and unconscious sycophancy.

Father Connell having warned and commanded his housekeeper not to speak for the present with the beggar-girl, on her own affairs, and his housekeeper obeying him, for a wonder, few words, except words of kindness, passed between her and the young stranger at her hearth. She busily engaged herself preparing the priest's breakfast ; and at all her proceedings Mary still looked on, with wonder and curiosity.

Father Connell had been out about an hour. He now returned, and called out from the parlor for "Peggy !" and Peggy, answering his summons, found that he had brought home a pair of shoes and a pair of stockings, for his new protégée, together with materials, very humble indeed, for dressing her out from head to foot. But until the latter could be made up, he earnestly consulted Peggy upon the best thing to be done, towards obtaining present substitutes for them. Peggy, after a pause, and bargaining for permission to have her own way in the matter, sallied forth from the house, and quickly came back, laden, however she had procured them, with a little stock of the necessities required. They had been used, indeed, but were clean, neat, and respectable, and Mrs. Molloy averred, would fit Mary to a T, for she thanked Providence she had eyes in her head. Her master approving of everything, Mrs. Molloy swept the table clear of its little heap of habiliments ready made and raw materials for the same ; and the next

instant, she and her young friend were busily engaged in the housekeeper's room, off the kitchen.

Father Connell would not—could not sit down to breakfast, pending the great change that was going on under his roof. He walked about his parlor, bolt upright, champooing the palms of his hands, very, very fast, and smiling smiles, as fresh as those of childhood. At last, the parlor door opened, and Mary Cooney, ablutions and the other business of the toilet all gone through, appeared before him; Mrs. Molloy—as if Mary bodily and altogether were of her construction, and not merely the tie of the bau-knot of her cap, leading her in, with an air of great self-approbation. The old man stood still, and his smiling features half changed into an expression of surprise, at the vision of the beautiful creature he now gazed upon. Her newly polished face, burning with blushes, caused by her shyness of her fine clothes, and her blue eyes scintillating and enlarged, with a new-come excitement, the beggar-girl did appear, indeed, surpassingly lovely.

He was struck too with her likeness to Helen M'Neary—as any one might have been; and he thanked Heaven, in a silent aspiration, that his good child, Neddy Fennell, had been the means, under God, of directing his attention to the salvation, here and hereafter, of a creature so interesting in every way.

But this purely grave state of feeling, anon and quickly passed into a characteristic mode of expressing his delight, in the change for the better, wrought upon her outward appearance. As he has been seen to do, while the little ma-a-clad boys, were passing him in the bosheen, he bent himself, resting his hands upon his knees, admiring her finery, and then, standing straight, and laughing to himself, clapped the palms of his hands together softly, and declared to Peggy, that nothing on the face of the earth could be better; and, as will also be called to mind, in the same way that he had turned Mick Dempsey round and round, and walked round and round him, in approbation of Mick's first new suit of respectable clothes, he now turned Mary Cooney round and round, and walked round her. At length, the inspection over, he dismissed Mary and her new protectress to their breakfasts in the kitchen, and then sat down to his own, very happy.

But though Mary was happy too, even to tears, which constantly streamed on, she made but little impression on the dainties before her, at least not one-half, nor one-third enough, to satisfy the ostentatious hospitality of Mrs. Molloy. The poor girl's mind had been suddenly stopped, and turned back in the circle in which it was wont to revolve, and though all was very blissful, all was, from its novelty, still very confusing. She did not yet understand, nor distinctly feel her changed position. She glanced shyly from one point to another of her new attire. She studiously regarded, above all things, her new shoes and stockings, and particularly admired the smallness of her feet, now shut up, for the first time, within limits which controlled their usual flatness and expansion. Opposite to her was a mirror hanging on a nail in the wall, of about six inches in height and three in breadth, at which Mrs. Molloy, upon a sudden call from the parlor, used to adjust her cap and her strong wiry hair ; and into this Mary could look at her own face, with its recent decorations ; and all these little things at first deeply occupied her, almost to the exclusion of any other sentiment or feeling.

Father Connell went out on business, and she was left alone with the housekeeper, at the kitchen fire. After a while, recollection began to engage her. Darby Cooney, was she indeed safe from his hand ? She asked Mrs. Molloy to give her assurance on the subject. The housekeeper, still obeying her master's instructions, asked, in return, how could she know anything about it ? And who was Darby Cooney ? But wasn't she safe at present ; and wasn't she with friends, who would keep hurt and harm far away from her ? And wouldn't the priest answer everything to her, when he came back to the house ? and Mrs. Molloy admonished her not to go on thinking any more of what was past and gone, but to stir herself, and come with her, Mrs. Molloy, and inspect the "nate" house she was in, and the garden it had to it ; and after that, the elegant chapel, and the beautiful church-yard, only half a stone's throw from her.

Mary had other questions to ask, but she suppressed them. She arose, stumbling for the first time in her life, from the cramping effects of the first pair of shoes she had ever worn, her feet swollen by the influence of the fire, as

well as by their novel state of captivity ; and followed Mrs Molloy on the proposed tour of discovery.

She had been in the parlor for a moment before, but under such circumstances, as only to have felt embarrassed with an overpowering sense of its importance. Now she dwelt, under Mrs. Molloy's special instructions, on each article of furniture it contained. A small glass bookcase, filled with books, sparingly and smearingly gilt on the backs, particularly attracted her attention and her wonder ; she did not think that there were so many books in the world, she said. Leaving the parlor, an old eight-day clock, almost eight feet high, placed in the little hall, with an old brass dial-plate, struck her with great awe, as well it might indeed. She stopped before it, and listening to its clogged and wheezing tick, tick ; she shrank back, asking in a whisper, if there was not something alive within it? Mrs. Molloy then pointed out to her the cellarage, under the open stairs, with its constant occupant, the half barrel of beer, and Mary conceived great notions of the abundance of the house.

They proceeded up stairs to the priest's bed-room. Here were a few little religious prints, "framed and glazed," as Mrs. Molloy desired Mary to observe well ; and in a corner hung, upon great brass hooks, Father Connell's Sunday hat and best wig ; together with the mysterious old chest of drawers ; and the young girl felt, she knew not why, an indefinable sense of a something—almost dread, which made her hurry out of the apartment.

They passed into the yard. The stable, containing Father Connell's fat, strong mare ; the step-ladder going up to its hay-loft ; Neddy Fennell's black hole of yore—the coal-shed ; the cask to catch rain-water ; the lines to hang the house-linen on for drying ; all this, and much more, were pointed out to Mary, whose mind still continued to fill, and fill with great conceptions of the magnificence of the establishment. From the yard into the narrow strip of garden—and Mary clapped her hands, and almost screamed out with pleasure. Small as was the little lot of ground, it was neatly kept, at all seasons of the year, and even now, on a November day, looked trim and pretty. Such vegetables, of the ordinary sort, as the month produced, were well taken care of ; unoccupied ground was

dug up, and raked, and in clean order ; the little walks were newly gravelled ; fruit-trees were pruned, and nicely nailed to the walls ; and though the little garden's blow of humble flowers was of course over, there still remained the white and pink flower of the laurestinus, and here and there bunches of monthly roses and rosebuds. Mary was in a paradise. Never before had she seen a garden great or small, and now the order, the neatness, the beauty of this little one, no matter on how reduced a scale, struck upon chords prepared by Almighty nature to vibrate to them, in her soul. She glowed with a new pleasure. It was as if a garden had suddenly and freshly sprung up, amid the hitherto moral wilderness of her own mind. She prayed, she begged of Mrs. Molloy to let her pluck one rose—no, one rosebud—only one ; the old lady consented, and as Mary placed it under her young bosom, it sparkled with her tears.

They left the enchanted spot, and proceeded up the silent little approach to the chapel, walled at in either side. They arrived at the very limited space before the chapel, almost entirely covered with the branches of a large lime, having a stone bench under it. Mary sat down on the bench, looking earnestly around her.

"And was that a chapel?—a chapel of God?"—she asked of Mrs. Molloy, in a whispering voice, pointing to the low-built and rude little edifice, now straight before her.

Her cicerone answering affirmatively, unlocked the chapel door, and invited her to enter it. She did so.

Since leaving the priest's house, all had been as silent as the tomb around her ; and the silence still continued, as they stepped into the humble place of worship. What the wonders of St. Peter's have been, and are to others, the wonders of this little chapel were to poor Mary. Its little galleries, propped by wooden uprights—they scarce merited a better name ; its little chandelier, also of wood, and covered with dingy gilding ; its little altar—gained by a few steps ; the picture of the crucifixion—not by a Rubens, or an Angelo, or a Rembrandt—everything filled her with sentiments of awe, admiration, and delight.

"Who is that?" she whispered, looking up to the picture over the altar.

"Our blessed Lord, who died on the cross, to redeem and save us," replied Mrs. Molloy, making the holy sign upon her forehead.

"To save us from what?" continued Mary. "Yes! I see He is dying—there is blood coming from His side!" She turned pale.

Mrs. Molloy was at first sorely tempted to burst out, and thunder upon Mary's scandalous state of religious ignorance; but luckily recollecting Father Connell's parting injunctions, contented herself with causing Mary to retire from the chapel, and return home with her. Arrived at the priest's house, and while passing its little yard, Mary glanced wistfully to the garden-gate.

"Would you like to go sit in the summer-house till the priest comes home?" inquired Mrs. Molloy.

It was the very liking most at Mary's heart that moment; and she accordingly walked to the little osier bower, at the garden's further end, and sat down in it alone.

In this situation, it cannot be said that Mary distinctly thought over anything; and yet her mind was thronged with a vast assembly of imperfect thoughts—snatches of reflections, and recollections, newly acquired ideas and sentiments, hopes, doubts, fears—the buzz of a great change going on within her; sometimes a swelling yet timid sense of her increasing importance; sometimes a sickening mistrust of herself; and all these abstractions dashed over, now and then, by realities which moved her very soul; her terrors of Darby Cooney, at one moment; her reliance upon Father Connell's power to protect her against him; her anxieties a contrary way, the next moment; fitting recurrences to Nelly Carty, the woman who had told her she was her daughter; but, through all, and pervading all, and above all, one master idea, that of Edmund Fennell. Was he well? Had he escaped Robin Costigan's revengeful intention? Mary had asked these questions of Mrs. Molloy, without obtaining any satisfactory replies. And why had he not been to see her ever since last night? And when would he come to see her? And was she to stay in the priest's house, or go to his?"

Profoundly wrapt in her mental confusion, Mary did not perceive the approach of a person into the little arbor.

Suddenly her wandering and downcast eye caught a glance of his feet, and she uttered a short shriek, and hid her face in her hands. But the good priest's voice re-assured her.

She dropped on her knees, and in the whine of her old trade, not yet forgotten, poor thing! fervently thanked Father Connell for hiding her from Darby Cooney, and keeping him away; and prayed blessings from Heaven on the priest's head, for all his charities to her.

Had she been well since morning? Very well, and very happy? And was Mrs. Molloy good and kind to her?

Mary answered that she had been very well, and very happy; and that Mrs. Molloy was everything that heart could wish; and that Darby Cooney had never come "next or nigh her" the whole morning.

"And he never shall, my good little child," said Father Connell, "I will keep him away from you as long as you stay in this house, at least; I have the power over him to keep him away; I am stronger than Darby Cooney." Mary began to look puzzled. "Yes, my good little child, I am stronger than Darby Cooney; and all round my house, all round my little garden, and all round my chapel, there are guards to keep him away from you, my poor child; guards more courageous than soldiers—so, have no fear of Darby Cooney's hand now, or for the time to come."

During this speech, Mary glanced to the tops of the garden walls, and down the garden into the yard; but there were no guards to be seen, and some misgivings again possessed her for a moment; but it soon occurred to her that Father Connell was a good man, and had already done a great deal for her, so that whatever he said must be true, and she would believe it.

"An' shure Masther Neddy Fennell didn't come next or nigh me ever since last night either, sir," she resumed after a while; and expressing anew gratitude to her protector—"Did Darby Cooney do him any harm last night, sir?" An' was his house afire last night? An' can you tell me, sir, why he is away all the morning? An' how soon will he come to see me?"

Answering these questions in due order, Father Connell hesitated at the last two, and asked her, "But why do you want him to come and see you, my good child?"

"Och, that *I* may see him at the same time, an' talk to him, an' hear him talkin' to me; an' that *I* may be near him, an' lookin' at him—an' for ever thankin' my tendher-hearted boy for his charity, an' his goodness to the poor shoolin' girl."

"And why do you want to be looking at him, and talking to him, Mary?"

"Och, och, an' isn't it because the love is on my heart for him!"

It was Father Connell's duty, and it had been his intention, to frown at this easily foreseen declaration; but now he could not. On the contrary, smiles played around his lips, as he stared straight into Mary's face, and remained for a moment silent. And during that moment, he made up his mind to defer all further notice of the case, plainly seeing that it was one of unconscious error, which did not call for sternness or severity in his treatment of it. He resumed speaking, however—and it will be perceived that, before entering the little garden, he must have conferred with his housekeeper on her and Mary's adventures during the day.

"Well, poor child, well; and didn't Mrs. Molloy show you the chapel to-day?"

"Och, yis, sir, yis; an' 'tis itself that's the beautiful place, an' the grand place; an' there's a beautiful image hung up in it, that she tould me was our blessed Lord, dyin' on the cross to redeem an' save us—an' och, sure enough, the blood was comin' down His side afore my eyes; did He make himself die, sir? did He kill himself?"

"No, Mary, no; sinners and wicked people nailed Him to that cross until He died upon it."

"Och, och, an' sure very wicked people they were; people like Darby Cooney, weren't they, sir? An' tell me this, sir, if you plase; aren't you sthronger nor Darby Cooney? an' shure you wouldn't let Darby Cooney nail you to a cross, to kill you? An' wasn't our blessed Lord sthronger nor them wicked people? An' why didn't He keep 'em off, an' not let 'em nail Him to a cross and kill Him?"

While imparting instruction to a talented child, the most competent preceptor is often baffled by the child's point-blank questions. In answer to such questions a case of

reasoning in series cannot with fitness or advantage be attempted, and, without this, the full dissipation of the child's doubt is impracticable. Regarding the present subject, in discussion between herself and Father Connell, poor Mary's mind was as that of a child, and her question was such a one as a child would put, and therefore Father Connell, smiling again, found a difficulty in meeting it. After a short pause, however, he went on.

"Yes, Mary, yes, my good little girl. He was stronger than all those wicked people, and stronger than all the people in the world, good as well as wicked; stronger than all the kings, and all the priests, and all the grandees, and all the armies of the world; stronger than the whole world, my good child; and if it had been His will, the whole world could not have hung Him upon that cross: but He did not use His strength against the wicked people, Mary; He let them put Him upon that cross, in order that He might redeem and save us."

"An' save us from what, sir?" Mary now repeated a former question, proposed to Mrs. Molloy.

"From the punishment due to our sins, my poor child; from the punishment due to our sins."

Mary paused, and evidently tried in her mind to understand this proposition; but Father Connell, watching her, saw that she could not—nor had he expected that she could. Suddenly, however, her eyes and cheeks glowed; suddenly she gave up the cold process of reasoning; suddenly she *felt* the truth, and said:—

"Och, och, an' it was a great love that He had on his heart for us, sir."

"That's it, that's it, my good child," resumed Father Connell, seizing, and of course squeezing hard both of Mary's hands. "That's the very thing, my poor, poor girl; that's the very answer to your own question, as truly given as if all the doctors of all the colleges in the wide world had found it out for you; come in now, Mary, my dear; we will talk of this, and of a great deal more, another time; but not soon, not very soon, Mary; with God's help, Mary, you will be a good child, a very good child; and I hope, and I trust, and I believe, a blessed child. Come in, now; come in till we see what Mrs. Molloy has to give us for our dinner: Mrs. Molloy is a good woman, Mary, only a

little rough spoken now and then—a very good woman ; and Mrs. Molloy is beginning to love you, Mary ; and if you are good to her, and submissive to her, I am very sure she will love you better and better day by day. Come in now, Mary, come in. Peggy!” he cried out, as they approached the house? and “Peggy” resounded through it, as Father Connell and his new favorite crossed its threshold.

From that day forward Father Connell did not prematurely engage in difficult questions of religion with the beggar-girl. As if he had had to instruct a mere child, indeed, he led her on, step by step, through its more flowery paths, and almost according to the routine course of childhood.

Mrs. Molloy, and some good religious women who resided together in the neighborhood—the same who, dressed in white linen cloaks, sang during vespers, inside the railings of the altar—taught her her prayers, day after day, and finally her catechism, Father Connell often overseeing them, or calling on Mary, as her lessons went on, to account for the faith that was in her ; and his occasional conversations with Mary never were without some questions on her part, regarding her new and delightful stock of knowledge, which it was most pleasing to him, as her comprehension grew more enlarged, to answer satisfactorily. Her progress was surprising. In about nine months the priest deemed her fit to approach her first communion ; and she was also baptized on the same day. Oh, happy, happy was Mary, while she went through the business of that day, clad in her white muslin dress, and her cap with white ribbons in it. Happy, and yet tearful ; proud of the day, and of herself, and yet the humblest of the humble. It was a time of flowers, too, and Mary had them all around her.

But Father Connell encountered a little more difficulty in removing from her mind a certain impression. Recurrence must again be made to the first days she spent under his roof. Her question of—“Bud when would Masther Neddy Fennell come?” was almost ceaseless, and the priest at first only told her why he could not come. His old master was so ill, and he was so much engaged. “But if the whole world was dyin’ I’d go see my tender-hearted

boy," she said. Nick M'Grath died, and she allowed some days to lapse, but then repeated her question. Father Connell now met her with an account of Edmund's great occupation in superintending the old man's affairs, and with a statement of his newly-acquired riches, according to the will made in his favor by his master. Mary was glad he was so rich, but sorry that his great business kept him away. Days passed over, and she said she should like to go out on the roads, and walk here and there. The priest himself accompanied her forth, and led her for a walk by the adjacent river's brink—a delightful walk, during the course of which everything around her was arrayed in nature's fully-matured gorgeousness. Thoroughly did she enjoy this recreation; but still she came back to Father Connell's house dispirited, and feeling a great want.

Some more days passed on, and Father Connell told her that Edmund Fennell was to come and dine with him, previous to his going a great, great way off—to Dublin, in fact—there to engage in new pursuits, which the good man tried to explain to her. Mary changed color, but listened meekly, and only said—"God spread the good luck, an' the happiness in his road, wherever he goes."

Edmund did come to dine with Father Connell, and Mary was summoned to speak with him in the parlor, in Father Connell's presence; but though her heart at first bounded to meet his heart, and though herself first bounded forward to be encircled in his arms, and though Edmund was not wanting in all show of affectionate interest, still the poor girl began to feel vaguely that there was in future to be a distance measured between them, and she retired weeping to her kitchen. Dinner came on, and she received the impression more strongly, when she observed that Edmund and Father Connell dined together, and that she and Father Connell's servant dined together.

Edmund was retiring for the evening—the last he was to spend for some time in his native city. Mary was again called in, that he might bid her farewell. She entered the parlor with a humiliated and touching air—but not a bit of ill temper in it. Edmund shook her hands, kissed her cheek, and spoke still most affectionately to her. In return, she kissed his lips and prayed the blessing of God "on his road, wherever he went."—He left the house,

attended to the outside door by Father Connell. The priest returned to Mary, and found her sitting stupefied on the floor.

"When he was a very little boy, my poor child," the priest said, "he promised you if ever he should be rich, he would share his riches with you; and now, my poor child, see whether he does or not—only see;" and he emptied a purse of gold into her lap.

Mary put her hand under the guineas and let them drop, almost one by one, back again into her lap, and at last dolefully said—"May the good God reward him for his charity; but I'd rather have the love from Neddy Fennell than all this goold, sir."

But in some time Mary became contented with her lot; and then, more than contented—happy. Day by day, a great and revering love for her protector sprung up in her heart, nearly to the exclusion of the former sentiment. Her religious duties, too, engrossed her, and very soon, Father Connell called in Mick Dempsey to engage her mind in fresh studies; and her progress in reading and writing—in reading, in fact, so as to be able to occupy and interest herself—was as surprising as was that which she had made in higher pursuits.

But her witnessing casually Edmund Fennell's marriage with Helen M'Neary, from her secret position in the little hall, proved, as regarded her love for him, a great drawback upon all her acquired discipline in the conduct of her young heart.

CHAPTER XXX.

TWENTY-FIVE, or twenty-six miles to the north-east of Father Connell's city, and in another county, there stood, in the times of which we write, what had been a good country mansion, now in ruins. Its living owner, as he was also the owner of a very considerable tract of adjacent acres, had never been seen by the dwellers on his noble estate. In fact he resided in nabob style in another country.

In his despatches to his agents, his constant cry was, like the gnome, for "more, more;" and in the highly civilized land in which he sojourned, desperate, and unteachable savages he called those from whom he drew his ample income, never admitting, meanwhile, that the merciless exactions inflicted on his wretched tenantry, by his agents, to meet the insatiable craving for "more, more," had made those deserted people poor beyond endurance, and necessarily reckless and fierce towards all whom they considered as the causers of their oppression. But our history can have little to do with this matter, further than that we are bound to allude to it, in order to show how it was that the once noble mansion was now visited by ruin—the ruin of neglect rather than of time.

A flight of many steps ascended to its hall-door, but the balustrade at either hand had tumbled down; and grass grew up through the joints of the steps, which were loose under foot. No glass was in any of the windows, and in some were fragments of sashes only; while their shutters, which had been closed, never to be re-opened, fifty years before, had either partially or totally decayed, and when the wind was high, their remnants flapped or creaked dismally. The once solid hall-door was rotten, and, although the iron bolt on the inside still held it in its place, it could very easily be opened. The sashes, frames, and shutters of the windows on the lower story were altogether gone; and the brood of a surly old sow could occasionally be seen scampering in and out through them in full career, and at their unbridled pleasure. Most of the aged trees of the adjacent park were denuded of their branches; the fish-ponds, to the right and left of the house, were a mass of aquatic weeds, emitting an unwholesome vapor; the shrubberies were choked up with bramble and briar, their neatly sanded walks no longer visible; everything around you had an air of chilly neglect and dilapidation.

The park was rented by a farmer, whose thatched dwelling arose in one of its most picturesque spots. Some time before the period with which we are concerned, this person sent one of his laborers to the house, a distance off, with instructions to fix himself in some sheltered nook of the ruined dwelling, and act as care-taker for his employer. One night only did the man hold his post; for so dreadful

a night had that proved to him, that, as he said and swore, he would not accept the whole year's rent of the estate to pass another like it. There had been such rattling of chains, and stamping of feet up and down the old staircases, and such frightful laughter in remote parts of the crumbling edifice, and such calling him by his name, and altogether such a hellish uproar and revelry as never was known in this world before.

A long, straight, broad avenue, perfectly arched overhead by the junction of two rows of very fine old oaks, ran from the house to the public road. We should rather say that these oaks traced out the course of an avenue that had been; for no distinction at present existed between the grassy way under foot, and the land at its either side. Years before, a massive iron gate had guarded the entrance to the avenue; but half of it was now clean gone, and the other half, broken off its hinges, was supported by an abutment of loose stones, while a low barrier, of similar materials, fenced up the space where the other half had stood; and thus were the grounds at that side protected against trespass.

A crumbling wall swept in a curve at either side of this old gateway; and it was with surprise that the farmer who rented the park discovered, early one morning—so early that it was yet twilight—to one side of it, a hastily constructed and most wretched hut, which certainly had not been there the previous night. A shapeless and unsightly structure it might indeed be called, being neither round, nor square, nor oblong—a truly unmathematical rhomboid. Its walls, if such an unartificial heaping up of sods, stones, and mud, could be so termed, were not more than three feet high; a few boughs stretched across these, with furze heaped over them, formed its roof; and some furze still, with one or two bundles of straw, nearly covered up the mouth of the den.

On a large stone placed before this suddenly built hut, the farmer discovered part of a delft plate, having one half-penny as nearly as possible in the middle of it; and this denoted that charity was expected from the passers-by; while on another stone sat an individual whom the farmer could not, in his own mind, call either man or boy.

By his height and his beardless chin he seemed indeed

to be a boy; but then his surly brow, his scowling eye, his dogged mouth, the absence of boyish plumpness in his cheeks, his long and muscular arms, his broad chest and shoulders, together with the shape of his tattered attire, appeared on the contrary to characterize him as a man.

Such huts as this described, wherein the wandering mendicant, suddenly seized with fever, or otherwise assailed by disease so as to hinder him from proceeding on his way, stretches himself, until he either gets better or dies—may often be met with on an Irish roadside; and they are generally erected by the neighboring peasantry to guard against the introduction of contagious illness into their crowded families. And no one knew this better than the honest farmer at present before us. But here was a wigwam constructed in one night—by whom? No hands in the neighborhood had, to his knowledge, been employed in the work, and indeed none could have been without his becoming acquainted with the fact. Was the strange looking guardian of the den its sole architect and builder? Our friend grew very uncomfortable as he took a second glance at him and it. In the whole expression of the nondescript creature, seated on the second large stone, there was something indeed unnatural and impish; and, in the grey dimness of the early and lonesome morning, the rude, misshapen hut seemed only like the apparition of one which he might have called up, as he would a mushroom, almost in an instant, from the earth, but which, supposing it of earthly material—his hands—were they human hands—could never have begun and finished in the course of a single night.

The farmer took heart, however, to address his new acquaintance, who, in most morose tones, gave him to understand that he was certainly the sole workman engaged in the building of the rude hospital; and, moreover, that his old grandfather now lay within it in a raging fever, as could plainly be seen and known by any one who would come close and look in.

The inquirer, gaining more courage, did approach nearer, and heard moans and incoherent ravings; and when afterwards talking over the matter with his neighbors, he added, that through the small aperture of the kennel not blocked up by furze and straw, the wildest eyes and the

most frightful face he had ever seen had once or twice glared up and been turned towards him.

But his neighbors, and indeed himself afterwards, attributed to the influence of fever the expression of those eyes and of that face ; and general compassion for the afflicted and aged man was felt throughout the neighborhood, under the influence of which he was supplied with every aid and nourishment that rustic sympathy and skill could afford or prescribe.

Neither was his unamiable nurse neglected, being furnished with such humble fare as the peasantry could bestow. But as to nightly lodging it was generally believed and feared, that boy or man, whichever he might be, he used to pass his nights quite independently in some corner of the ruined mansion, in which the farmers's stout steward had refused to take up his quarters.

Although the people of the vicinity thus exercised their charity towards the occupant of the uncouth hut and his grandson, there arose amongst them, however, after a while, whispers by no means favorable either to the one or to the other, and of a nature that inspired a vague dread of both. For it became noticed that the self-called grandson was by no means diligent in his attendance on his patient; that for the greater portion of a day he was not to be seen near him; nay, that for three or four days together he had been away, no one knew where. The contrast between his youthful appearance and the expressions of his features; his manners and habits, so little in accordance with boyhood, or even with humanity; his thanklessness for favors, and his piggish answers to all who spoke to him, next told against the mysterious new-comer. He had, besides, severely and viciously hurt two children, while at their play in the fields ; and as a climax to his abominable practices, a little anecdote must be related.

A favorite brood hen, belonging to one of the adjacent cottagers, became missing. When looked after, it was found suspended by the neck from the bough of a tree, quite dead—very well hung, in fact—and the dark-browed boy-man, with his arms folded, was, at the same time, observed seriously contemplating it. When questioned on the subject, he deigned to assume a devilish grin, while he answered :—

"I wanted to see the way a fellow would die whin he'd be hanged on the gallows."

"Lord save us an' keep us!" said the woman, whose pet hen had suffered under the young philosopher's experiment; "an' why did you want to know that?"

"Fur a rason I have; tell me this—if I knocked your brains out wid this stone, wouldn't I be hanged?"

The woman pressed her thumb hard against her forehead, repeatedly making the sigh of the cross as she retreated, without asking another question.

Then, as to the sick person whom he called grandfather. This individual in a little time began occasionally to be seen near the mouth of his wigwam on all-fours, as if he could not better support himself, or was not yet sufficiently recovered to stand upright. But there was some doubt about this fact of his continued incapacity for locomotion. One person positively asserted, that while engaged in the middle of the night watching for a dog that had committed depredations on the sheep in the neighboring park, he had seen pass very near him, in his ambush, a figure with long grey hair floating about its shoulders, hobbling away in the direction of the ruined house, but hobbling with great rapidity, however; and although the night was very still, no sound came from the footfall of the figure. The startled watchman shouted out; the figure turned its head, and now he could almost swear that he beheld, in the clear moonshine, the fearful eyes, which that very day had glared upwards at him, from the interior of the sick man's hospital. But a noise, as if from the dog for which he was on the watch, here made him look in another direction, and when he again would have studied the questionable apparition, no one appeared in view.

The man hastily gave up his watching-post, and crossing the park, made his way down the avenue to the hut outside its ruined gate. At a glance he became assured that its disagreeable guardian was not visible; but this was nothing to the purpose. He drew close to the curious structure; heard the usual moans and lamentations issue from it; peered closely into it, and saw the sick man himself lying stretched on his straw, quite alone and seemingly helpless. He called out, and again the frightful eyes met him. He hurried homewards, stricken to the heart with terror.

But after all, there was no witchcraft or goblinism in the matter. He had really and truly seen Robin Costigan shuffling rapidly towards the old mansion, and he had also really seen Robin Costigan lying on his back in his den outside the avenue gate.

And as soon as Robin judged himself free from further observation, shrewdly concluding that no more questions would that night be asked of him, he protruded at first part of his body from the opening of his lair, and then crept out inch by inch on his hands and knees. Thus he remained for some time, turning his head from side to side. All was safe, he at length concluded. He then crawled to the low crumbling wall that swept round from the gateway, and scrambling over it like an old ferret, and squatting down at its inside, again looked and listened all round him. Still nothing was to be apprehended. At a few steps distant, a tangled and forsaken shrubbery, which, however, to any one who could or would thread it, formed a short cut to the point where he had encountered the dog-watcher, now invited his further progress. Darting into this, he made way through it, with a skill that showed he was no stranger to its difficulties. In a few minutes it delivered him almost into contact with the ruined house.

Turning to the rear of the building, he got into it through the almost open space of one of the kitchen range of windows, and proceeded along an arched stone passage. It was pitch dark, but he knew his way and did not hesitate for an instant. He entered the cellarge of the house, traversed it, and arrived at another passage, which apparently terminated all the under regions of the edifice. But this did not satisfy Robin Costigan. Standing over a certain spot, he struck his stick in a measured kind of way against the floor; paused, repeated the same signal; and presently, close by where he stood, a square flag seemed gradually to raise itself up—the circumstance becoming observable from a dim red light which broke through the orifice it had concealed. The old beggarman then descended a few stone steps, and continued through an apartment—dripping overhead with damp—to a more distant vault. Here two smithy-looking men were busy at a small furnace, or occasionally near to it. Costigan joined them, and immediately afterwards the hen's hangman added

himself to the party—the same individual who had raised the trap-door to admit Robin into the secret manufactory. It may here be noticed that the contrivance of this trap-door was not as old as the building of the mansion ; and that it had been devised and constructed by Robin and his friends, in order to give any chance passenger on a level with it above, the idea that there, indeed, terminated the under vaults of the house.

“ Well, ould Darby the divil,” said one of the men—the scoundrel was known to his present associates only as Darby Cooney—“ well, ould Darby the divil, you’re bravely to-night ; the faver isn’t goin’ through you very intirely.”

“ Will ye ever be finished with this job,” growled Darby, by way of answer.

“ This is the last cast,” replied another.

“ We’re finishin’ off the last cast ; do you think these ’ull stand the jingle, Darby ? Here, you black-muzzled gal-lows’ bird, show these to him.”

Darby’s nurse brought for inspection to his patient, a large pewter dish full of five-penny and ten-penny pieces and half-crowns. Darby scrutinized them very closely.

“ They’ll do,” was his laconic comment.

“ If they wasn’t the right sort we’d hear of it,” remarked the first man who had spoken.

“ I don’t like botchery, Paul Finnigan, nor I don’t like prate. Fire to you, sowl an’ body, you curmudgeon ! Will you take care ov yourself, will you ?”

The first part of this discourse was a reply to Paul Finnigan’s familiarity, the second, accompanied with a blow of his cudgel, was addressed to his tender young nurse, who had stumbled, and nearly upset the dish of base coin which he was bearing back to the artists.

“ You’re a little cross to-night, Darby the divil,” said the other man ; and he indeed was an artist in his way, and presumed on his cleverness.

“ Let me hear none of your gab neither, Moloch,”* rebuked Darby, growlingly ; “ will you finish the cast to-night, that’s the question ?”

“ Out an’ out, by the hokey poker,” replied Moloch.

“ Plase God, an’ we will,” assented Finnigan, “ ’twould be the divil’s own quare play to be here any longer.”

* The wicked.

"We'll cut to Connaught agen," was the suggestion of the grandson of the sick man of the hut.

"An' 'tis high time for ye to be done," resumed Darby, "a fellow might as well be in one of their blackest cells as in that cursed pig-sty. My ould bones is knotted together lyin' in id."

"Bee this holy file," said Molochth, raising one of the implements of his art, "'twas a bright thought in you, Darby the divil, my darlin'."

"I was afeard that young jade of an informer 'ud bring the spies on us—an' if they came this way I could give ye warning—that's the whole of id; you know I kep ye together these many years, while others war thrapped like rats," was Darby's reply.

"There isn't a betther watch-dog, nor a betther head-piece, wid the life in his carcase, this night," complimented Molochth.

"Hogh! You're sure you'll be all ready to start before day-dawn? That's the talk;" continued Darby, authoritatively.

"'Tis a'most day already," he was answered.

"I'll be on the thramp afore ye—ye know where we are bound for at present, and where we're to meet together agen?"

"To a place twenty-five good miles from this, by the hokey pokey."

"'Tis a wondher that the whishkey let ye remember id. Ye must be there as the dark comes on to-morrow night week. Maybe I'd want your help. Maybe the Babby an' myself could manage the job."

"Bee this holy saw," said Molochth, ceasing the motion of a very small one, with which he was finishing the edges of some half-crown pieces—and as he spoke, he looked fully from beneath his bent brows into the malignant, the hellish eyes of the old beggarman—"Bee this holy saw, Darby the divil, I'd a'most lay down my own life to stop that business—faugh! 'Twill be a sorrowful job to spill the blood o' the little crature."

"What's that you say?" asked Darby, in a slow, inward voice.

"I done bad jobs in my lifetime, bud I don't like this one. She was so comely, when she was very young an'

small, that 'twas like the sunshine to my eyes to look on her; an' she wouldn't harm the wing ov a fly, herself—poor, poor thing!"

Darby Cooney rose up from a large stone, on which he had been seated: half limping, half running, he passed Moloch, and bending his head forward, glanced searchingly into the face of the other man, Finnigan. In evident alarm Finnigan stopped working.

"An' what do you say?" queried Darby.

"Faith, an' I hardly know what to say."

Darby Cooney very slowly altered his position; stepping a few paces back, he stood firmly on his outspread legs, and propped himself with both hands upon his stick. The two men quailed before his regards. The Babby—we give him his new appellation—came close to his side, and folding his arms hard, contemplated his old preceptor, with the same steady and studious look he had worn, when watching the death-throes of the gibbeted hen. A pin could be heard to fall, where just before there had been a din of rasping, and hammering, and sawing.

"Do ye remimber the oath that ye took, and that I took, and that she took, as well as the rest ov us? Answer me to that question. Do ye remimber it? Paul Finnigan, do you remimber it? Dinnis Keegan, do you remimber it?" Each of the men answered his question affirmatively.

"An' the oath was, that death, by the hands ov the rest ov us, was to fall upon any thraitor or informer among us, wasn't that the oath—wasn't it? Answer to me again—wasn't it?"

This question also was assented to.

"An' isn't she a thraitor, an' an informer—isn't she? Isn't she?"

"If she was a thraitor," answered Moloch, alias Dinnis Keegan, speaking, however, in a wavering tone; "if she was a thraitor, the spies would be on us by this time; I don't think she is a thraitor, poor young crature."

"Bee the black devil, bud she is, Dinnis Keegan. Didn't she sell my life—ay, my own life? Didn't she put the cord upon me? Didn't she bid him to hould me fast, an' to keep me fast? Ay, ay—she did; and since I cum here, wasn't she a thraitor to every one ov ye? While I was in

that place abroad, didn't I send the Babby to watch her? Tell him what you found out, Babby."

"I hard her tellin' th' ould woman everything she knew; I was listenin' to her wid my ears, an' I was lookin' at her wid my eyes," imperturbably answered the Babby.

"Isn't she a thraitor thin? Isn't she, isn't she?" demanded Darby Cooney, in a grim and deadly triumph; "and though fur the last nine months or more, she was left to herself, an' had her own way, mustn't she be talked to at last—mustn't she?"

The imperfect jury were obliged to admit the crime committed against their fraternity. "Poor young sow!" sighed Moloch, as he gave in his unwilling verdict, "poor young sow! 'tis all over wid her."

"To-morrow evening week then, you promise to meet me at the close of the day; do ye promise? do ye?"

The men gave the promise required; Moloch stipulating, however, "if you don't want us very much intirely, we'd like not to put our hands to the work."

"I tould ye before," replied Darby Cooney, "that if the Babby an' myself can do id, we won't ax your help; bud be near us, at yer peril—ay, at yer peril. Ye know I have other hands to work fur me; an' take care how ye put me to id, or ye'll rue the day. Meet me afther the nightfall, to-morrow evenin' week—ye know where—an' I say agen, at yer peril."

Darby Cooney's features quivered spasmodically, and even his head had a momentary shaking fit, as he held up his stick to eke out his threats. Without another word, he then hastily limped out of the workshop, silently and gravely attended by the Babby.

The next morning, the people of the neighborhood found the materials of the temporary hospital, near the gateway of the avenue, scattered about in every direction.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE bridal party proceeded homewards from Father Connell's house; and a strange bridal party it was. Scarcely a word was interchanged between the three persons of whom it was composed. And their silence was not of that nature which is the result of an infelt happiness and content, too great for expression by words; it was the silence of apprehension for the present, and fear for the future; misgivings of having done wrong, and a dread of overtaking punishment.

Edmund shrunk from contemplating to what he had exposed Helen, should her father discover their clandestine marriage. He trembled, too, at the bare thought of what such a discovery must entail on his revered and beloved friend, Father Connell; and his conscience now continually asked him—"have I not been too precipitate, and too selfish, in hurrying Helen into this irrevocable step? Should I not have indeed taken chance for what the probable changes, of two or three days, might bring about?"

He felt his young bride shudder, as she leaned upon his arm. Cheerily he tried to speak to her, but in vain. The sentences came cold from his lips. She shivered again. Was she so cold? he asked. No, no, she was not at all cold—it was a fine night enough, Helen answered. But still the wretched shuddering recurred. "My father's curse!" was the internal thought which caused it. "I know he will drive me from his door—that will not be much—but oh! he will curse me too! My dear—and after all, my dearly loved and loving father! And do I not deserve it, even for my unmaidenly and undignified conduct, do I not deserve it?"

Helen did not indeed deserve quite so much; she soon had her punishment, however.

The only person of the party who had no fear for the future, was Miss Bessy Lanigan. True it was, she felt in common with Edmund and Helen, a great terror of Gaby M'Neary; of his public exposure of her amongst her numerous circle of little genteel friends; of his furious anger; of his horrid abuse; almost of his stick. But then,

Mr. Q. O. unexpounded! Was there not consolation in the very utterance of his name? They arrived at Miss Lanigan's hall-door. Lounging against one of its jambs, his hands in his cuffs, and turning up one eye and one side of his face to the young moon, stood Tom Naddy. On the arrival of the party, he saluted each in turn, and then, without a word, knocked at the door for them.

"What brings you here?" asked Edmund.

"You have been sent here by my father to summon me home?" demanded Helen, much agitated.

"That's id, sure enough, Miss," answered Tom Naddy composedly, "an' this isn't the first time to-night he sent me either; no, nor the second time: he's like a mad bull intirely, rampagin' about the house, an' cursin', an' swear-in', that whin he lays houl't on Miss Lanigan—"

"I vow and protest," interrupted that lady.

"My God!" cried Helen. "Conduct me home at once, Miss Lanigan—or no, upstairs if you please, for an instant. Edmund," she continued, when they had all arrived in the miniature drawing-room—"Edmund, good-night—and farewell too—and do not start or gainsay me in what I am going to advise, for both our sakes. I must appear at once before my father, so that good-night is best said at once—and the word that is made use of, even for a longer parting, must also be said at once; we part, indeed, here—on this very spot, to await, wide asunder, better and happier days, for our re-meeting. You will not, I know, be selfish enough to tempt an immediate exposure of all that has happened this evening, by accompanying us, or following us to my father's—I know you will not! Nor will you, by your appearance in this town, to-morrow, run the same risk—so, good-night, dear Edmund!—and not a word, I pray of you again, for the present; I will write to you, and you will write to me—and in perfect confidence we will consult each other on the best thing to be done, for the terrible future; dear Edmund, I implore you, if you love me, to comply with my wishes in another respect. Return this moment to your old priest's house—tell him what I recommend you to do, and see if he will not agree with me—and again and again, good-night, dear Edmund!"

He stood stunned before her by his great affliction; seeing this, she fell on his neck, and added, in a trembling

voice, and with sudden tears—"Dearest Edmund, farewell—dearest, dearest Edmund! My husband—farewell!"

One most tender, and almost despairing embrace, the young pair interchanged; the next moment, Helen had nearly dragged Miss Bessy Lanigan down her own stairs, and out of her own house. Edmund sat alone for some time. At length, he started up, and walked rapidly in the direction of Father Connell's dwelling.

Arrived on the steps before Gaby M'Neary's hall-door, the ladies, when the door was opened, bid each other good-bye; in fact, Miss Bessy Lanigan would not, for the present, face Gaby M'Neary, if she got a thousand pounds for it, she said; and only leaving her best regards and compliments for him, hurried home, mincing her steps, and pattering along the streets, as rapidly as a little rheumatic stiffness in her joints enabled her to do.

Helen M'Neary flew into the parlor, where she knew she should find her father, almost wild with agitation and terror. Without allowing him time to utter a word, she flung herself on her knees, and clasping her hands, cried—

"Dear father, do not be angry with me; and forgive me! neither Miss Lanigan nor I noticed how the evening wore away—but I know I have been out of the house too long—forgive me, oh, forgive me! Never again will I give you cause to be displeased with me, in thought, word, or deed! And am I to go to my own room again, this moment? I will do so willingly, father, oh, most willingly!"

Gaby M'Neary was startled at this unexplicable energy and passion; it was quite disproportioned to the occasion. He looked at her steadily. She was not weeping; but her beautiful face was ghastly, almost haggard; her eyes were distended, and her shining gold hair was wildly dishevelled. Had she indeed taken such a dislike towards her suitor, Mr. Stanton, that this effect was produced by it? He brought to mind, too, that upon leaving home that evening her step had been heavy, her hands and limbs trembling, her farewells with him hurried and incoherent. Gaby M'Neary was now more than startled; he was frightened and alarmed for his child. Again he looked studiously at her. Her dry, glittering eyes, as she still knelt, glanced every other moment over her shoulder, towards the open door of the parlor.

"Am I to return to my own room?" she continued, "oh, yes, sir—do, do, let me go!"

"What's all this, Helen?" said Gaby, holding out his hand to her—"get up, child—get up out of that, you young jade. Sit on that chair, near me now—there. Blur-ances! what's all this about? Tell me at once, you baggage—good child, I mean—don't go on frightening the life and the liver out of me. Did you see a ghost, or Dicky Stanton?—By Gog alive, there's little difference between one and the other; bring your chair closer to me; closer, child, come closer to me."

She obeyed her father's command, but did not utter a word, only shivered through every limb. Gaby felt that the hand he held was like death's, clammy cold. He put his huge, fat arm round her little delicate neck; laid her head on his shoulder, and fondled her cheek with his hand, or twisted her golden curls round his finger, and resumed, in a voice exceedingly gentle for him—

"Helen, you damned little hussey, don't you know you're the pet of the house, and the mouse of the cupboard—eh? Don't you know that, Helen?"

This show of affection, uncouth as it was, she was wholly unprepared for, and it went through her heart. She remained still unable to speak, but turning her head on his shoulder, until her eyes were hidden in it, she wept and sobbed most miserably.

"Damn the blood of it, girl, don't cry that way, or you'll make as great a fool of me as yourself; there, there now, girl, give over now, I tell you:" he gave her a father's kiss.

"Oh, dear, dear father," Helen could have said, "do not curse me when you know all;" but she only muttered these words within herself, twining at the same time her arms around him.

"Blug-a-bouns! girl, you'll put my shoulder out of joint, and I told you you'd make a fool of me," and he shook his head indignantly, but he also shook with the motion two large tears from his eyes, which fell into Helen's bosom; "be damned to it! but I never thought this would happen to me; why, Gog-alive, I'll turn you out of the house, if ever you make a fool of me in this away again, you young baggage."

"Oh, no, no, no, you will not—I am sure you will not—I

am sure you never, never will do that! Promise me, dear father, that you never, never will do that!" she united her hands, and looked with brimming eyes fully into his.

"Well, I won't, poor girl, I won't."

"Never, never, sir!"

"Well, never, never, then, and be damned to it."

"God bless you, dear father, God bless you."

"But, blug-a-bouns! I dont see what's the matter with you yet, at all, at all," Gaby became grave and contemplative; "oh, ay, I forgot," again he ruminated; "tell me, Helen, hasn't that chip-in-porridge, that Dick Stanton a letter of yours, in answer to one of his, in which you accept him as your lover and future husband?"

"No, indeed, sir, he has not. On the contrary, sir, he has only a foolish note of mine to him, in ridicule of a long, strange letter which he wrote to me; but instead of that note encouraging him, it is a decided refusal of him."

"Blood-an'-thunder-an'-ages! let me see his letter."

Helen quickly ran up stairs for it, returned in an instant, and placed it in her father's hands; he read it over rapidly.

"Oh, Gog's-blug-a-bouns! The sneaking mutton-headed ass! and does he call this riddle-me-ree a love letter! If I don't twist his long nose for him, the divil may box punch. Oh! ha! Dick Stanton, you were putting your finger in my eye, were you? Oh! tare-an-ages!" And Gaby M'Neary snatched up his last solitary glass of wine, emptied it in a jerk, and stamped down the empty glass on the table, thereby breaking off its shank. "Oh! of all the chaps in Christendom, that harry-long-legs of a fellow, that's neither fish nor flesh, nor good red herring—to try to humbug me, in my house! Oh!" and Gaby flung the broken glass into the fire place—"Hah! there's his rap at the hall-door—but don't be afraid, Helen—hold up your chin, my girl, and look merry—blur-an-ages! 'twas no wonder for you to get the jaundice, which I see you have—at the notion of such a starved spider creeping after you! Get out of the room now for a moment—first give me another kiss, and don't cry any more, I tell you—run away now—oh, blood-an-fury! Dicky Stanton, to think he could humbug me to my face! off with you at once, you little baggage, and leave this jockey to me."

As Helen left the room, Gaby M'Neary flourished his

arm over his head. The hall-door having been opened, Mr. Stanton's boots creaked across the hall, and entered the parlor. Mr. Stanton had come to supper, on a most express invitation.

"Well, sir! do you want me?" began Gaby M'Neary.

"Sir—the-a—the-a—" and Mr. Stanton stood and stammered, the picture of surprise.

"The-a—the devil, sir!" continued Gaby, "so my gentleman, you came into my house to play your asses' thricks on me, did you?"

"Mr. M'Neary—sir—the-a—I—the-a—really—don't understand you, sir."

"If you don't then, I'll soon make you. You told me you had a letter from Helen, accepting you for her husband?"

"And so I have, sir—the-a—"

"Let me see it this moment!"

"I will, sir; I have it here, sir, lying next to my heart—in the-a—the-a—"

"Well, pull it out of the—the-a, and hand it here to me."

From a pocket on the inside of his waistcoat, made expressly for the treasure by his own hands, Q. O. unexpounded drew forth the answer to his letter, from G. O. unexpounded. Gaby M'Neary snatched it from him, and read it twice over.

"And what the devil do you call this hodge-podge? Is this the letter, accepting you as a husband, that you told me you got from Helen?"

"Yes, sir—the-a—the-a—that is the very letter."

"Phu! phu!—this expression, or rather sound, of ineffable contempt cannot, we fear, be at all translated; "phu! phu! get out, you stupid brute! Oh, Gog-alive! what a purty fellow to come coorting into any man's house! And you had the damn'd assurance to tell me that you had a letter from my daughter, accepting your proposals?"

"And sir, isn't that the-a—"

"No, it isn't! No, it isn't, you poor, creeping, crawling *ownshuck*! No—but it is a note, refusing you to your teeth, and laughing at you to your face, you poor stuttering animal. Get out of my sight, this moment, and let me never hear your sugar-a-candy boots screeching within my doors again!"

"Mr. M'Neary—"

"Mr. Tom the divil!—go home, I tell you!" and Gaby bounced up and seized his stick; Mr. Stanton would have expostulated, but as his late friend strode towards him he prudently retreated, shutting the parlor door between himself and his host, and holding its handle on the outside. Gaby, still threatening and exclaiming, reseated himself by the fire. In a few seconds the door slowly opened again, and Mr. Stanton half entered in.

"Mr. M'Neary—" he began, when whirl and smack went Gaby's stick against his shins: the door was then quickly reclosed, and Mr. Stanton's boots were heard as quickly creaking a retreat out of the house.

Gaby rang the bell. Tom Naddy answered it; and, indeed, this was no great trouble, as he had not been far out of the way.

"Tell Miss M'Neary to come here, you brat."

Tom shouldered off. Helen soon appeared.

"You needn't be much afraid of that creeping bug-a-bow any longer, Helen; I don't think he'll show his nose here for some time to come. But what the divil is this over again? Why you look as if you wanted to get him back! What's the matter with you now, girl?"

"My dear, dear father, I am thankful to you beyond what I can say."

"Why, then, a damned queer way you have of showing it. Why don't you look glad, if you *are* glad?"

"My dear good father, don't be angry with me."

"Blood-an-fury-an ages, girl! I thought you'd be ready to dance cover-the-buckle for joy; havn't you even thanks to offer me?"

"Indeed I am most thankful, sir—"

"And if you are most thankful, why do you look as if you were going to be hanged? Do you want to drive me mad again? Damned well for Stanton to get rid of you, I believe—oh, may the man that tries to do good to a petticoat, whoever may wear it, or whatever she may be to him—may that fellow be cursed by act of Parliament, I say!"

Gaby M'Neary was stumping off to bed; Helen called out after him to return, and say God bless her, before they separated for the night. Gruffly enough, he acceded to

her request, and then left her alone. She looked round the cheerless parlor, clasped her hands, and whispered shudderingly to herself—"Oh, I am punished already—oh, had I but waited one day! And my father has yet to know all!"

Trying to escape from her own thoughts, she also hurried to her bed-chamber. And thus ended Helen's bridal night.

CHAPTER XXXII.

WHEN Nelly Carty first announced to the beggar-girl, under her own roof, among the shower of houses, that she was her mother, Mary felt delighted at the disclosure. The novelty of finding herself claimed by any human creature, was grateful to her previous sense of utter loneliness in the world. The woman's zeal and energy, and indeed success, in saving her from the effects of Darby Cooney's visit, naturally aroused her gratitude also. But Nelly Carty, by telling her that she had yet to make sure of the fact of her parentage, caused to arise in Mary's mind a doubt, which helped to chill the further growth of these feelings. She afterwards instructed her to conceal, for the present, the whole matter from Father Connell, and the doubt grew stronger.

Mary went to live with Father Connell; and for some time hearing or seeing nothing of Nelly Carty, and gradually becoming inspired with new affections, to say nothing of her dwelling constantly on an old and an overmastering one, almost allowed the circumstance to pass out of her thoughts. Time still went by, and she grew indifferent to it; and by degrees, as the improvement of her mental and moral habits progressed, Mary nearly wished that she might never hear anything more about it. In fact, she now felt a repugnance to being proved to be the child of the unfortunate Nelly Carty. She had had opportunity afforded her, of knowing what good people were, and of being loved and protected by good people, and her misgivings and her

recollections told her, that the potato-beggar was not one of the good.

In about three months, as Mary knelt on an evening, with crowds of other persons, in the dusk of the little chapel, preparing to approach the confessional, she felt her cloak plucked gently by some one who knelt close behind her, and was turning her head, when in a very cautious whisper, almost at her ear, she was thus addressed :—
“Don’t stir, or say a word, *ma-colleen-beg*, but only listen well to the words you’ll hear. I am Nelly Carty, your misfortunate mother ; an’ I tould you I’d make you an’ all the world sure that you were my child ; an’ ever since you set eyes on me last, sure I was out of this town, far away, roamin’ here an’ there, to thry an’ come across the man, that is the only crature on the face ov the earth can do it ; but I couldn’t larn tale or tidin’s ov him ; he’s at none of his ould quarthers, widin thirty miles ov us, any how ; bud he’s off, off, a great way intirely, this time, fur a rason he has, I’m thinkin’. Well, *avourneen*, don’t be afeard but that I’ll make him out for you, sooner or later ; an’ until I do, I’ll never come an’ disturb your pace an’ quiet in the priest’s house. An’ *avoch* ! unless it was to see you as my child, that I’d come, to the ould priest’s dour, little business I’d have there. I’m not a good woman, my *cuishla*, an’ th’ould man wouldn’t let me next or nigh you ; an’ I’m kneelin’ here to-night, not fur the confession, or fur the prayers—the Lord look down on me an’ help me!—bud only that I may have this talk wid you, unknownst to him, and to everybody. Ah, now the Heavens be wid you, *ma-colleen-beg* ; I’ll soon be on the thramp agen, after that man, an if mortal wit can do id, I’ll make you sure, sure, sure.”

Mary now heard Nelly Carty arise from her knees behind her, and walk, in her heavy, hob-nailed brogues, out of the chapel.

This incident once more disturbed, for a time, the quiet of the beggar-girl’s lot ; she feared every day the return of Nelly Carty, with the full proofs she seemed so confidently to promise. But time still passed away ; and the potato-beggar not appearing, and Mary being now more and more occupied, and more and more beloved by her new friends, again suffered the matter very seldom to oc-

cupy her mind. It was not till the very day of her first communion, that she caught another glance of her self-called mother. Mary was just arising from her knees, before the railings of the altar, when the poor woman appeared, squatted, Turk-wise, among the crowd, straight before her, her hands clasped on her lap, her eyes fixed on her supposed child, and streaming tears, and her lips wide apart—agape in fact, with the great admiration and interest which will give to the human mouth that expression.

"God bless you, *cuishla-machree*," hoarsely whispered Nelly Carty, as Mary made her way through the crowd, to pray prayers of thanksgiving in a secluded corner.

"Amen—an' the same to you, good woman," answered Mary, raising her own moist eyes upward.

The next day, and the next, and the next, Mary again experienced disquietude, anticipating Nelly Carty's appearance at Father Connell's door. But she need not have been so troubled.

A second time the potato-beggar had indeed returned to her town, after a vain search for Robin Costigan. True, she had succeeded in ascertaining that he, and his gang, had recently been hovering about the old mansion, twenty-five miles off; but she had also made sure, that none of them were at present in its neighborhood, nay, in itself—not even excepting its most secret vaults. And whither Robin Costigan had slipped away, she had no clue to conjecture. Upon the chance that he might be found in Joan Flaherty's novel, she had come back to the shower of houses, though not to her own old tenement. She was still at fault.

But an occurrence, totally unconnected with him, now absorbed her whole mind and soul. She heard of Edmund Fennell's re-appearance, from Dublin, in his native city. Her heart misgave her as to the cause of this event. She learned that he endeavored to remain in secret, as much as possible. She watched him closely; she dogged him, and the rest of the bridal party, to Father Connell's door; through all their disguise, recognised who his companions were—and upon this discovery, though the woman had no reason to suspect the private marriage, arose a further ordeal of trial and punishment for Helen M'Neary.

Gaby M'Neary had, for a good portion of the summer,

resided with his daughter, in a handsome cottage, about two miles from the town. There was little of architectural beauty or stateliness in the edifice, but it was respectable, and very comfortable; and though not surrounded by aristocratic parks or pleasure-grounds, still it had its accompaniments of garden, and orchard, and shrubberies, and groves, and hedge-row lanes; with its handsome lawn, sweeping before it. On particular business, he had been obliged to return to the town, during the days we have last met him there; but on the very morning after Helen's clandestine marriage, finding his business concluded, he returned to what ought to have been his happy country home.

Helen was glad of the change; glad of anything that could serve to divert her mind from serious thinking, of which, for the present at least, she was incapable. Arrived at the little villa, she wandered about all day long, whenever she could escape from her father, walking fast in the open air, and scarcely pausing a moment to rest herself or look around her. After dinner she was again out in the fields, or along the green lanes, and evening—almost night indeed—stole upon her, ere she thought of returning to her father's roof.

It was not a bright night, though there was a moon; for large masses of clouds, with woolly, silvered edges, sailed in quick succession across the beautiful planet, scarcely ever allowing her to give more than a flash of her magic light at a time, while only scraps of the deep blue sky were visible between their interstices. It blew a breezy blast too, and corn-fields were undulating and rustling all around her, and the landrail was creaking, loudly and incessantly in the late meadow; and the trees were waving to and fro, in the breeze, not violently but gracefully; and watch-dogs began to bark at every side, and at different distances; while from afar the broken rush of the river, making way in that direction over an uneven bed, would have fallen pleasantly upon any ear but hers.

She was hurrying homeward, through one of the bo-sheens, or green lanes just alluded to, when a figure broke through the deep shadow, in which one of its sides was wrapped, and stood on the path a few paces before her.

Helen uttered a little low scream, turned and retreated.

but the figure advanced quickly upon her, caught her by her dress, and detained her. She now faced round courageously, and confronted a tattered, middle-aged woman, whose black eyes, flashing in a momentary gleam of the moonlight, fixed upon hers and expressed much vigor and daring.

"You needn't be in the laste afeard ov me, Miss," the woman said, "I come here to meet you, fur your good, an' not fur evil to you; 'twas too free ov me to lay hold on you, I know—by far too free fur the likes ov me; bud I have words to say that you ought to harken to; an' if you'll stand an' spake to me I'll take my hand from your coat—will you stand an' spake to me?"

"Who are you?"

"Nothin' more nor less than an unfortunate beggar, that thramps, on her bare feet, from mornin' until night, to seek the bit an' the sup."

"And what business can you have with me?"

"That's to be tould. Will you stand and spake to me, Miss Helen M'Neary? 'Twill be useful for you to hear my words. Tell me that you'll stand and spake to me."

"And how comes it that you know me so well?"

"There is few widin twenty miles round, that I don't know, Miss; sure I see everybody, some time or other. But you'll make the promise to me, Miss, an' I'll take away my hand, as I ought to do? Promise me to stand an' spake to me."

"Well, I do promise; and now, say whatever you have to say, good woman."

"Thankee, Miss. But I am not a good woman, Miss; I am far, far from id. I didn't larn to be good whin I was young, an' what I didn't larn thin, I didn't care about whin I was ould. I was comely whin I was ov your age, Miss; but 'twould be betther to me than millions ov money, that I was blind, an' broken-backed, an' fit only to be kicked out ov the way, by every passer-by. An' young cratures have a notion, that beauty will do all an' everything fur them; bud many a one lives to curse the face that brings only shame an' sorrow to its wearer; an' I know now, whin 'tis too late, that if there's pace fur a woman, rich or poor, in her ould age, 'tis by keepin' herself frum sin and shame whin she is young; an' whin once a young girl goes wrong,

every one she knew afore is hard upon her ; an' she is forced to take up wid people worse nor herself ; an' she goes on from evil to evil, an' she never raises her head again—never—never." The woman drooped her shoulders for a moment, and groaned.

"And," she resumed, "the poor young crature can laugh an' shout too, afther a time : but it isn't joyful she is—no—" she looked straight but vaguely before her, as if taking a long retrospect of the sinful and mysterious past—"no, it isn't—joyful she is."

"This is all very shocking," said Helen, deeply affected, "but what can it have to do with me ? What is your real business with me ?"

"Take care ov yourself, Miss Helen M'Neary," pursued the woman, not seeming to have noticed the interruption. "You're not sthronger against a sthrong temptation than another wid a handsome face."

"What, woman !"

"And if you havn't already gone asthray, the path that must lead you asthray isn't far frum your feet."

"You are a bold an' an impertinent woman," said Helen, walking fast away, now in the direction of her home.

"No matther about that," answered the stranger, darting after her, and again catching at her dress. "Hear all I have to say, young lady. I tould you it would be useful to you to listen to me. I never was a wife, an' yet I was a mother. About eighteen years ago, I had a daughter as beautiful as the sun in May—too beautiful fur such a mother to have. Before her third year, she was stole away from me. I thought I'd never lay eyes on her agen. Bud I found her since then ; an' that Christian crature never lived, that is more comely to look at than she is. You are comely yourself, young lady, but she is beyond you. I thought my ould wicked heart was dead an' froze widin me : bud at the sight of my lost an' found daughter, I felt there was nature in id still ; she brought the life and the love back to id agen. An' I remimber times gone by ; I remimber my own misfortunes ; an' if any mother ever kep evil away from her child—evil to her body, or evil to her sowl—that evil will I keep frum my child. Ay, by the sky above my head ! Ay, an' by Him that is above the sky ! The man or the woman that puts hurt or harm, grief or

sorrow, upon my child, must feel bitter vengeance come upon their heads for the deed. Are you harkenin' to me, young lady?"

"I am, indeed; but surely I have never harmed or injured your daughter?"

"You have harmed her, an' you have injured her—though you didn't know you were doin' id. Bud let you know id now from my mouth; and let the words of my mouth caution you."

"Why, I do not even know your daughter."

"Bud for all that, you are the bitterest foe she has upon the face of the earth."

"I cannot possibly understand you."

"Thin I'll give you the knowledge, Miss Helen M'Neary; an' forewarned forearmed, you know. *My colleen, my child*, that is left me, to warm the ould heart widin me—she has the deep love for Edmund Fennell, an' Edmund Fennell has the love for her—ay, ay—you may start back, an' you may knit your proud young eye-brows at me—bud she loves him, an' he loves her! An' no wondher that he should love my *colleen dhass*—for you couldn't look at her widout loving her. An' my daughter, *my colleen*, shan't walk in her mother's road, if that poor wicked mother can put a bar afore her. Bud you stand between the boy she loves and her, and you must not stand between them. You must not thry to coax Ned Fennell from my *colleen*. Ned Fennell must be my daughter's wedded husband and—or my curse, an' my vengeance, will cling to whoever hindhers him! An' do you undherstand me now, my proud young lady?"

During the latter part of this speech, the beggar-woman raised her bare arm high above her head; her tattered mantle had fallen from about her face, allowing her grey hair to be fluttered by the breeze; and again, as if expressly to give effect to her appearance, the moonlight flashed for an instant upon her features and figure, showing her eyes glittering with anticipated fury, and her teeth clenched in determination.

"You'll stand fur me now, I see," she resumed, "widout houlding you, Miss M'Neary."

Helen did not hear her, or at least, did not heed her, and made no immediate answer. She stood apart from

the woman, vaguely staring at her, her head erect, her features and her whole air stern, for one so young. She dropped her eyes quickly upon the ground, and her face changed into a thoughtful expression, though a stern one still.

"And if this be true," she at first asked herself, "for what have I braved my father's anger and my father's curse? If this be true, on what kind of man have I bestowed my heart's love, and to what kind of man have I vowed a marriage vow? But can it be true?"

Another short pause of thought, and she addressed the potato-beggar.

"Your name is—I forget if you told it me before; but what is your name?"

"Nelly Carty, Miss."

"You live in the town yonder?"

Nelly assented, describing, with some vanity, her independent holding on Gallows Green. Helen shuddered for an instant, at the thought of her husband ever forming an improper connexion, with the daughter of such a woman.

"How do you know that Mr. Fennell and your daughter are acquainted in the way you say?"

"How do I know? Didn't I see them together? Didn't I hear them talking together? Didn't I hear their kiss? An' don't I remember what the love is between two young people?"

Nelly Carty alluded to the night of the fire in Nick M'Grath's house, when Edmund and the beggar-girl had an interview in Joan Flaherty's hut, which she had imperfectly witnessed over the cross wall of her dwelling.

"And you solemnly assure me of this?"

"I'll swear id afore the priest fur you; an' more be-token, if you go this moment to the same priest that I am now thinkin' of, you'll hear more ov my daughter, Mary Carty."

"What! Does she live under Father Connell's roof?"

"An' she does so," answered Nelly Carty. "Hearkee, Miss. Didn't you happen to come across her, or see her, whin you went there, wid Masther Fennell, late yesterday evenin'?"

Helen started, as she recollected the stealthy witness of

her marriage, of whom she had caught only a vague glimpse in the darkness of the little hall; and she was now shocked and terrified, upon grounds distinct from her apprehensions of Edmund Fennell's unworthiness."

Was the wretched woman before her—horrible to think!—but was the wretched woman before her acquainted, through her daughter, with the deadly secret of her private marriage?"

"How do you know," she resumed, "that I was at Father Connell's last night? Did this daughter of yours tell you so?"

"Why, thin, no, Miss Helen M'Neary, she did not tell me so. She tells me nothin'. She can tell me nothin'. We don't spake a word wid one another. We are not let to speak a word wid one another. The ould priest would not let us; for he has made Mary Carty a good girl, an' he knows well that her mother is not a good woman; an' so he wouldn't let the wicked mother come near the innocent child."

This was a relief. If Helen's rival were so carefully cherished in all good ways by so good a man, as Helen knew Father Connell to be, and protected against this woman, who called herself her mother, how could she be evil or bad? Or how could Edmund Fennell and she obtain opportunities for such an interview as the potato-beggar reported herself to have witnessed? This was a relief, if it were true. But, on the authority of such a person, was it true? And was anything that had been uttered by that person true? There was a conflicting incoherence in everything she had heard, and yet a plausibility, which irritated Helen.

"Woman," she cried out, after a harrassing pause, "you must belie Mr. Fennell; he cannot be what you would describe him to me."

"An' what is that?" asked the beggar angrily.

"He is not—oh, I know he is not—such a low, base profligate."

"I called the young man by no such name, Miss. Bud I have my fears for the future,"—answered the beggar-woman, again fiercely showing her former energy. "An' I only say what I said afore. Let him or let her that would hindher them frum bein' lawfully married take care what they do."

And this was another blessed relief to Helen. She saw plainly, from the woman's present meaning, that it was impossible her marriage could be known to her. But still her mind was greatly tormented. She paused for another moment, and took her resolution to escape from all her uncertainty ; and then said—

"Well! Good evening ; and don't speak loud or hold me by my dress, as you have done before ; I am not afraid of you, woman—let me go on my way, to my father's house ; good-night."

"The good-night to you, thin, Miss ; but though you're not afraid of me, maybe you'd hearken to one word more that I have to say to you ; maybe you'd hear another rason why you ought not to stand in the way between Neddy Fennell an' Mary Carty. You're goin' home to your father, you say. I'm glad to hear id ; fur listen, Miss. Mary Carty isn't goin' home to her father this night ; an' yet, Miss, fur as proud as you stand there afore me, hearkee to the word more I have to say—the man that is your father is Mary Carty's father."

Helen turned, in utter astonishment, to question the woman ; but she had fled. Availing herself of some way, near at hand, of which Helen was ignorant, but with which she was well acquainted, Nelly Carty had quite disappeared. The lonely girl looked round, in every direction, with a strong impulse to follow her ; but, recollecting that her father must now long have expected her at home, she checked the impulse, and hastened towards the house.

The determination, to which she had come, she soon put into execution after her arrival at home. Certain that Edmund Fennell must have complied with her entreaties, on the previous night, to return to Dublin, she now wrote him a short note, directed to his address, in that city :—

"EDMUND—The instant you receive this, I conjure you by your declared love for me—and what is more—by my sincere love for you—to come back immediately, and remove from my mind, doubts, sprung up since our parting—the only doubts which, if you cannot explain them away—must ever make me miserable at the thought of being

"YOUR WIFE."

And this note she gave in charge to Tom Naddy, peremptorily commanding him to put it in the post-office of

the town, two miles off, that very night ; and, indeed, Tom was not faithless to his trust.

Helen sat for some time, with as good a face as she could wear, in her father's presence. Both then retired for the night.

And thus ended the second night of Helen's honeymoon.

But the punishment of disobedience and indiscretion was not over.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

ON re-entering his house, after seeing the young husband and wife beyond the threshold of his outside door, upon the evening of the unhappy marriage, Father Connell, still very saddened and meditative, again sat down in his little parlor. Mrs. Molloy could hear him sigh, and even groan, very often. His thoughts tried to occupy themselves with the new misfortune—for in his estimation, misfortune it was—that had happened under his roof that evening ; namely, the witnessing of the marriage of Edmund and Helen, by Mary Cooney. His displeasure was high against his housekeeper, for having suffered the poor girl to leave her bedroom on the occasion. As to Mary, he feared much from her, on account of the unlucky circumstance. So he sat a considerable time, revolving what was best to be done, and finally summoned Mrs. Molloy to his presence.

Mrs. Molloy knew what she was called in for ; she also knew, in her heart, of what a dangerous negligence she had been guilty, and was really sorry for the crime ; but not quite so much so as she pretended to be. For she entered the parlor, hanging down her huge head upon her breast, holding upon her fore-finger her stiff check apron to her eyes, and uttering the little and broken sobs, which would intimate the gradual dying away of a great storm of grief. Not more than twice in her life before, had she deemed it necessary to become so utterly afflicted ; indeed,

as may be called to mind, it was far from being her usual method of eluding her master's wrath ; at present, however, she feared more than ever she had done the priest's displeasure, and hence the very rare occurrence of her self-humiliated, tearful, and contrite air.

At the very first sight of her repentant sorrow, Father Connell, as she had anticipated would be the case, half forgave her her offence. He addressed her, however, very gravely.

"I thought, Mrs. Molloy, I had laid my strict commands on you, to keep that poor child out of the way, during what was going on here, this evening?"

First suffering to escape her many of the little sniffing sobs, just spoken of, the housekeeper assured the priest, that she thought she had turned the key in the lock of their bed-room door—for in Mrs. Molloy's sleeping-chamber, a little bed had been put up for Mary—but, as it would appear, she really had not done so, and "sure that was her only fault ; sure his Reverence knew, as well as she did, that no creature alive could be more careful than she was, ever and always ; only that the lock of that misfortunate door, ever since the day it was nailed on, had a fashion of—"

Father Connell interrupted her—"Mrs. Molloy, can you tell me if the poor child fully understood what was going on ? or that she had been long enough in the hall to understand it?"

Mrs. Molloy was quite sure that she did, and that she had.

"That is unfortunate, Mrs. Molloy, that is very, very unfortunate ; very unfortunate for us all, to say nothing of the affliction to herself. Is the poor young thing quieter now, Mrs. Molloy?"

"A little, sir. I had the world an' all ov' throuble, tryin' to coax her wid my two arms round her neck, and to pet her, an' to rason wid her, afore I could get her to stop cryin', sir."

"And is she in bed yet, Peggy?"

"No, sir."

"Then, Peggy, the best thing you can do, I believe, is to send her here to me till I speak a word with her too—don't you think so, Peggy ? so go out to her, Peggy, and tell her

I want to speak to her, the poor child ; and Peggy, as soon as you come back here with her, you needn't stay in the parlor, Peggy ; I want to say something to her alone."

The housekeeper accordingly withdrew ; returned in a moment with her young charge ; ushered her barely inside the parlor door, and closed it on her, shutting herself out.

Mary performed her little drop-curtsey, on the spot where she was, and then stood stock still, her arms hanging by her sides, her head and eyes cast down, her face very pale, and a wretched expression about her compressed lips—the expression of a kind of resigned despair, which on the features of one so young and so handsome, it was miserable to see.

After gazing a moment at her, the old priest silently held out both his hands to the poor girl. She caught the motion by a sudden glance upwards ; let fall her eyes again on the ground, again made her simple curtsy, and advanced to his side. He closed his hands upon one of hers, and over, and over again, pressed it vigorously.

"Well, well, my child ; well, well. It can't be undone now, and I see you are sorry for it ; there now, there. It was a very wrong thing indeed to do ; in this house, my pet, my business is often of a secret nature, which ought not to be pried into, or spied into ; but there now, there ; I am sure you meant no harm."

He released her hand ; she slid, without a word, to the back of his old arm-chair, and there remained still. In a little time—"I didn't come to spy, or to pry, sir," she said timidly, and in a whisper.

"And why did you come at all, then, my poor child ?"

"To look at him, sir—to look at him once agen, an' he such a long, long while away from me ; I didn't know what he was in the house for—och, och, I didn't ! Och, if I did sure I could never stay in the house."

"And I believe you, my child, I believe you ; I believe that you did not come to pry, or to spy ; but it is wrong to talk of not staying in the house, Mary. And tell me, my child. How did you come to learn that Mr. Fennell was here at all ?"

"I hard the sound of his voice, sir, into Mrs. Molloy's bedroom, through the hall, an' through the kitchen—an

If twenty halls an' kitchens were between me an' the sound of his voice, och, wouldn't I hear id? wouldn't I?"

"Well, I am glad to see you so grateful, Mary; it is a very good thing, my child, to be grateful to our benefactors."

"It is, sir; I know it is. Bud, och, sir, there's more than that in id. Afther all that is come an' gone, I love him in the heart yet, sir; och, I do—I do love him in the heart."

"To be sure, my child, to be sure you do; you love him with a grateful love, which is due to the first friend you ever knew; and with a sisterly love, which you felt you owed to him for the brotherly love he promised you, the last time he went to see you on the Green; and also, for his love to you since, in giving me the means, under God, of keeping you in this poor house, Mary; for a poor house it is, child, unless when it is helped by a good, rich person like him; and you owe him the love, too, my child, for enabling me to have you here, and make a good Christian of you, and a good little girl of you, and to keep you from Darby Cooney; and a good girl you have become, my poor child, a very good girl; and so, all that is right, Mary, right and proper, and like a good Christian, and I told you all along, that was the way to love him, my child."

"I know, sir, I know; bud what's the use ov hidin' it from you, of all the people on the face ov the earth? For all the reasons that you laid down, sir, I love him, an' I thank him; I don't forget a single thing that ever he done for me, from the very first hour we came across each other. Whin he was the tendher-hearted little boy, that shared his own little breakfast wid me, an' I hungry an' wantin' it sorely; an' that pelted down Darby Cooney for me;—och, no, I remimber id all; all that he has done fur me, up to this very day. An' fur all that, I love him, sir, in the way you say; bud, och, sir, over an' above all that, I love him! Och, sir, she was a beautiful crature, an' a grand crature, an' a stately crature, that you married him to here, this evenin'—wasn't she, sir?"

"Hush, Mary! hush, my child. You had no right to know anything of that; and you have no right ever to speak of it, ever, ever to say a word about it. Do you know, Mary, that if that marriage was spoken of, out of

this house, he and the poor young lady, that is now his lawful wife, would thereby suffer great misery?"

"No, sir—but would they?" asked Mary in breathless interest. "Why so, sir? How, sir?"

"It is unnecessary, my poor child, that you should be made acquainted with the reasons, how and why; but I am sure you will believe your old priest's word, when he tells you as much—I am sure you will, Mary; and when he repeats to you, that if the unfortunate marriage you were an eye-witness to this evening, should become known, for the present at least, the world hardly ever saw a more unhappy young pair than your friend Mr. Fennell, and his poor young wife, would be; oh, yes, my child, a betrayal of that secret would indeed make them very, very wretched. And you take my word for it now, Mary? You take my word for it, my good girl?"

"I do, I do, sir," she replied, in a trembling voice. "I do, I do, sir—the poor young cratures! An' is that the way that the sorrow comes upon them in their early days? An' is that all that the love can do for them? Bud, sir," she went on, after a moment's pause, "sure there's one comfort for them, anyhow. Sure their secret can never be broke through, sir—never, never, sir? There's only one that you could have a fear ov breakin' through id, sir—an' sure she's too good a woman, an' she loves an' she fears God an' you, sir, too well to do id—isn't she, sir? Doesn't she, sir?" demanded poor Mary, now very eagerly.

Father Connell was suddenly and deeply affected. It was plain to him that so remotely did she put herself out of the question of betrayal of the secret, Mary did not even dream that any one could suspect her of the act. And now he would not proceed a step farther, to blow a doubt of herself over the unsullied mirror of her own mind. Besides it would have been unnecessary to do so. Perfectly and thoroughly satisfied he was, that Edmund Fennell's secret marriage would never be divulged to a human being by Mary Cooney.

And yet, he asked himself, is there not some human temptation to make her act differently? Would every one feel as free as this poor child does, on the occasion, of jealousy, and the sins it whispers us to commit? He put

back his hand to her, over his chair; she laid hers in it, and he continued aloud:—

"Now, may the Lord bless you, my child;" but recollecting that he must answer her questions as to Mrs. Molloy's trustworthiness, he added—"No, no, my child; I have the fullest faith in Mrs. Molloy, and I put my entire confidence in her. No, no, my child, you are right, very right. She wouldn't do such a thing, I do believe, for the whole wide world."

"Thank God!" said Mary, heaving a long, long sigh, but not a very unhappy one.

"And now, come round here, to me, my good child, and my very good child, for your to-night's blessing."

She did so, meekly and gracefully kneeling on one knee, and bowing her forehead, on her small clasped hands. The priest raised one of his, a little above her head, and prayed down, in a more lengthened prayer than usual, the blessing, and the grace, and the help of her God, upon the young sufferer.

"And now again, Mary, I have one word to say to you, before you go to bed; you are getting very lazy, Mary, my child—oh ay, you may stare at me, with your mouth wide open—but I tell you you are, Mary;" the old man laughed; "there's the flower-bed, at the right-hand side of the summer-house, and I saw two weeds in it to-day; worse than that; there's my grand new surplice, that I would let no one but yourself put the nice work on—and it's not finished yet. And Mick Dempsey tells me, that he was obliged to take back the last book he lent you—the wonderful life and history of Robinson Crusoe, he says—because you read it too often, and didn't pay attention enough to your lessons for him. And now, you are a lazy little Mary—aren't you? So, go along to your bed now, you little hussey, and if ever I have to make a complaint of you again, or if ever I hear a complaint of you again, I'll—oh, you can't think how I'll punish you, Mary." He shook and pressed her hand, and to the affectionate and benign expression that broke through laughter, from his old handsome blue eyes, Mary, before she left the parlor, smiled respondingly, with a relieved heart; and she had scarcely gone, when a loud and quick knocking sounded at the outer door of his little premises. His mind misgiving him as to

whom the late visitor might be, he hastened in answer to the summons himself. His misgiving was right. It was Edmund Fennell, who came to consult with him upon Helen's advice and entreaties, that he should return immediately to Dublin. Not wishing Edmund again to go into his house that evening, Father Connell led him into the little garden, and there, walking up and down, they continued their conference. The old priest, pausing often, and asking many questions, at length decided that, under all the circumstances, Helen's advice was a good one, and ought to be followed. Edmund promised to follow it, now coupled as it was with that of his old and most revered friend; in agitated and deep affliction, and in tears, he promised; and so he and father Connell parted. And he kept his promise.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE next morning, at break of day, Mary Cooney began to pluck away the two weeds in the flower-bed, to the right hand side of the "summer-house," and after them, a good many more that, the truth to tell, were to be found throughout the little garden. Then she went into the house, to wash the garden clay from her hands, that she might assist Mrs. Molloy in the discharge of some housewifery duties, which for many months she had been accustomed to undertake. Breakfast followed; then household affairs again; after which, she made her best attempts at dressing for all day, and finally, taking her work-basket, containing the priest's surplice and her lesson-books for Mick Dempsey, went out into the little arbor, sat down in it, and began plying her needle, and coming her tasks alternately—indeed, often doing both things together.

The following day, and very nearly at the same hour, she was once more at work and at study in the willow arbor. It was about three o'clock. Father Connell was out. She heard a loud knocking at the door of the yard, which reverberated through the stillness of the little solitude all

around her. She started and looked straight down the garden walk, and through its wooden railing into the yard. A young lady, richly and fashionably dressed, and of noble carriage, Mary thought, and seemingly much interested about something, crossed the yard from the entrance door, speaking with Mrs. Molloy. Her own maid-servant followed her. They stopped before the little gate in earnest conversation. Mrs. Molloy pointed up the garden to the arbor; the lady, turning her head in the direction, immediately entered the garden, and advanced rapidly and alone towards Mary.

At the first glance Mary recognised Edmund Fennell's wife; and if the poor beggar-girl had thought her handsome, and stately, and grand, upon the occasion of her private marriage, when she saw her in neglected attire, and pale, and depressed, and drooping, much, much higher was her present estimate of the personal pretensions of this young lady; for now her eyes were flashing, her cheeks and lips rosy red; her air animated and dignified, though, indeed, with a little dash of hauteur about it; and as to her dress, Mary deemed she had never seen one so costly. To tell the truth, in anticipation of this very visit to Mary, Helen Fennell had put on her very gayest out-of-door finery, and in every respect decorated her person, so as to produce an overawing effect upon her poor rival.

Her first look at Mary, when half way up the garden path to the little arbor, greatly interested her. She saw a lovely young creature, of about her own age, clad from head to foot in habits of very humble material, but neat and spotless as a quaker's, and withal, fitting Mary elegantly, though not modishly. They were of a cut of Mary's own invention, but Helen thought it worthy of suggesting the fashion to a young countess on her wedding-day.

She drew near her, and looked closer. She noticed the flowers at Mary's waist, and the simple one set among her golden ringlets, under the snow-white border of her modest little cap. Again she looked, and still more wistfully; and started back at the likeness of herself, that now appeared before her. She remembered the old beggar-woman's words, and believed, indeed, that it was a sister she looked upon.

The two young women stood face to face, together Mary

had arisen, holding her work in her hand, and though she at first trembled a little, the weakness was soon either controlled by her self-possession, or absorbed in the admiration and awe with which she regarded her visitor. She made as profound a curtsy as she knew how to perform, and stood upright and still, her eyes fixed on those of Helen, which, in their turn, after she had saluted Mary more graciously than she thought she should have done, sent back the poor girl's gaze with interest. And thus they remained for some little time, attentively studying each other.

"How do you do, my dear?" Helen began, at length. "Will you allow me to rest myself in this nice little summer-house, for a few minutes, until Father Connell comes home?"

Mary grew paler than she had been, at the sound of Helen's voice, but she answered her without stammering, and with a natural ease, and affability, which ought to be called politeness.

"Why I do declare," continued Helen, sitting down, "'tis quite a nice little place altogether. And who keeps the garden so neatly, my dear?—pray isn't your name Mary—Mary Carty, I think?"

"Mary Cooney, my lady, kindly at your service."

"May I make so free as to call you Mary?"

"Och, ay, an' a thousand times welcome."

"Well, I was going to ask you who does the work of the garden."

"We all do id between us, my lady; first, there's an ould lame gardener, that comes to prune the trees, an' to nail them up, an' do the heavy diggin' fur the vegetable beds; an' afther that, the priest himself, an' his housekeeper, an' his boy, an' myself, we do what we can, in turn, my lady."

"And what is your part of the work, Mary?"

"The flowers mostly, my lady."

"Don't call me 'my lady'—don't call me 'my lady,' Mary; 'tis not my title."

"I won't then—*mam*."

The moment she had uttered the word, "*mam*," Mary blushed high, in a fear that she had done wrong, in at all giving a clue to her knowledge of the secret marriage; and, at the same moment, Helen winced under the almost cer-

tainty that, in making use of the word, Mary held her at her mercy. She did not immediately approach the topic, however.

"Well, and what nice needlework are you doing?" She examined it.

"'Tis to be a surplice for the priest," answered Mary.

"And you are reading too—may I look at your book? What is it?" Helen took it up.

"My lessons fur Mister Dempsey, your honor," and now Mary tried to escape the two dilemmas of ignorance of one of Helen's true titles, and a dangerous knowledge of another, in which she had already placed herself.

Helen turned over the leaves of the book; pondered, smiled, and again addressed her new acquaintance.

"But do you know a woman of the name of Carty?—Nelly Carty?"

Mary answered that she did.

"And you are nothing to her?"

Mary replied that she had no good reason to know she was.

"But have you *any* reason to know that you are?"

Mary paused, evidently embarrassed. Helen watched her, for the first time, in a doubt of her sincerity. But Mary's hesitation soon cleared up into perfect ingenuousness.

"I *have* a reason to think that I am something to Nelly Carty, your honor; but I was bid not to say anything about it fur the present time, and that's why I hope you will not ask me any more questions on the head ov it."

Helen looked into her face, and felt that she was telling truth.

"Well, and why did you call me mam, just now, Mary?"

The beggar-girl was more puzzled than ever. She changed color, again and again.

"Tell me, Mary, do tell me," persisted Helen.

The beggar-girl covered her face with her hands, and burst out crying.

"Och, och, an' didn't I see you married to him, the night before the last!"

"Well, Mary, and if you did, do you know that his dearest happiness and mine are in your keeping? Do you know that if you told any one that you saw us married, he

and I would be destroyed for ever? And could you betray the secret, Mary? Could you?"

The poor girl started up, flashing almost anger from her serene blue eyes, as she answered—

"May God forgive you now, Mrs. Edmund Fennell," she said—"an' it's little you know the heart that's in the body of poor Mary Cooney, if ever you thought that she could harm a hair of the head of Edmund Fennell, or the hair of the head of any one that's his! Och, may God forgive you."

Helen, shedding some answering tears to those which gushed from Mary's eyes, soothed her, and assured her that she thought no such thing, and never, never, would she think such a thing.

"But you loved him?" whispered Helen, after some time.

"I did love him; an' I do love him, in the very heart; bud that's not the rason why I should do him hurt or harm," answered Mary. There was another pause between them.

"How long is it since you first met?"

"'Tis about six, or seven, or eight years."

"And how often did you meet since, Mary?"

"Five times intirely—barrin' the night afore the last."

"But," continued Helen, looking round her, and dropping her voice still lower, while she recollected part of Nelly Carty's communications of the night before—and she blushed deeply ere she spoke further—"there were kisses, Mary—kisses of the lips—he used to kiss your lips—and you used to kiss his lips—during those meetings?"

"He never kissed my lips," answered Mary, sighing deeply. "I remimber that well; bud I kissed his lips, three times in my whole life; an' I never felt his kiss in return."

Helen again looked at her, in utter amazement, though in perfect trustfulness. Her further questions led to a full disclosure of Mary's acquaintance with Edmund Fennell—the old story—since they first became acquainted, boy and girl, almost child and child together; and how Edmund took her away from Darby Cooney, and saved her from him, and gave the priest money to save her from him, and how she had lived, now nearly a year, under the priest's

roof comfortable and happy. Helen listened to her, in, if possible, increased wonder and admiration, and also with reflections that made Edmund Fennell dearer than ever to her heart. She took the still weeping Mary by the hands; she put her head upon her shoulder, upon her bosom; and she told her over and over again, that henceforward she should be her dear friend and her sister, and that her home, and Mary's home, should be the same, the moment she had one to offer her. Mary thanked her often and fervently; and the two young rivals thus parted, each loving the other.

CHAPTER XXXV.

ALMOST immediately after her interview with Nelly Carty, Helen, as may be remembered, wrote a letter, calling her husband from Dublin, merely upon information derived from a very disreputable source, that he was, or had been, unfaithful to her, by professing to love another. This was an impetuous step, and before Helen retired to bed that night, she felt that it was. And now she grew impatient with herself for having been impatient, and resolved to govern herself better for the future.

The following morning, her first reflection was, that Edmund had been foully belied, and Helen would no longer entertain the shade of a doubt of him. But the next moment, she fastened with avidity upon the thought that Edmund would be sure to be at her side that evening, and by his denials, and his disproofs of the strange woman's assertions, set her heart quite at rest; and this showed that Helen still doubted, notwithstanding that she had told herself she did not. At all events, she resolved and re-resolved, to bear the wearing away of the long, long day before her, quietly and patiently.

About half-an-hour afterwards a little imp buzzed passingly in her ear, that it would be a good thing to see and speak with her formidable rival; and without awaiting her husbands's appearance, ascertain from herself in what re-

lations Edmund and she stood towards each other. But at first Helen would not attend to the little imp's hint, courageously resolving and striving to put it out of her head. He came back on the wing very soon, and renewed it close at her ear; Helen wavered—and again—and Helen went to see Mary Cooney.

Perhaps the little imp should not have been called a little imp, for, after all, there was nothing very mischievous in his suggestion. Certainly, compared with the floundering fellow who advised Helen to write the letter to Dublin, this was a little angel of wisdom.

Helen returned home from her visit to the beggar-girl, in Father Connell's garden, much, much happier than before she had made it. And now she was sorry indeed for having written to Edmund Fennell. The remainder of the day passed on, and the greater portion of the evening, and she became again more impatient than ever. But her maid came in, upon some pretence, to the parlor, where she was sitting with her father, and gave a secret signal to Helen, which she was authorised to do by virtue of as secret a whisper, interspersed with a bar or two of whistling, received from Tom Naddy, and Helen's heart beat thick and fast. And, in fact, having obtained permission from her father to go out of doors a moment, and run round and round the house to enjoy the moonlight, Helen boundingly issued forth, and in a secret place met her bridegroom husband.

Everything necessary for an explanation was said on both sides, and Helen's heart became indeed perfectly relieved of any doubt of Edmund Fennell. In his conduct towards poor Mary Cooney, she now saw nothing that was not pure, generous, and noble. They were lingering out their interview, when an unseen person knowingly cried "hem!" very near them.

"That's your maid," said Edmund.

"And she is come to inform me, that my father grows impatient of my absence from the house," whispered Helen, "so good-night, dearest Edmund! And that sad word—farewell, too! Forgive my precipitancy in calling you here from Dublin—but you will go back again to-morrow morning at least."

Edmund, interrupting her, pleaded very hard for one

interview more the next evening, after which he would instantly—instantly return to Dublin ; and Helen need not fear that it should be known he was in the town so near at hand ; he would conceal himself all the following day in private lodgings ; and Edmund was interrupted, in his turn, by a bellow from one of the windows of the house, embodying these words :—

“Helen! Helen! Where the devil are you, you baggage? Come in this moment out of the night air, wherever you are! Do you want to get the quinzey or the rheumatism before your time, you young hussey? Come in, I say, and let me and the moon go to bed, or let her go to the devil if she likes.” The young couple could interchange but few words more ; but still Edmund pressed his request ; and Helen granted it. And the next night Edmund did come to see his young bride ; but he saw her not.

Early in the morning Gaby M'Neary rode to the town, to attend the grand jury assizes, the circuit judge having arrived the previous day.

It was late when he was on the road homewards, as he had dined with certain of Dick Wresham's scholars, and the evening sitting had been very convivial. In fact, night had already begun to fall.

It did not suit Gaby M'Neary's habit of body to have it shaken violently when he rode abroad, so that he now allowed his quiet horse quietly to walk along, picking his steps, in slow progress towards his stable door. Gaby's heavy oaken cudgel was over his shoulder. He had cleared the suburbs about a mile, when the animal he bestrode suddenly stopped, and seemed to wonder very much at something to one side of the road, a few paces in advance ; but this was no skittishness on the part of the beast ; it was, in fact, just what it has been called, excessive wonder, mixed up, indeed, with grave inquiry. So, he looked, and looked, and having at length decided in his own mind that the object was only a potato-beggar, squatted on her bag, filled with the produce of her day's begging, he soberly proceeded on his journey.

Gaby M'Neary had, like his horse, been studiously observing the figure, and arrived, with him, at the same decision concerning it. Horse and master went on a few paces. The person stood up, deliberately walked into the

centre of the way, and as deliberately took hold of the bridle of the former. Again the animal stood still.

"Who the devil are you? And what do you want?" questioned Gaby M'Neary, unshouldering his cudgel and clutching it firmly.

"You ought to know me well enough, Masther Gaby," answered the woman.

"What, you ould bundle of nastiness! Why the devil should I know who you are, or anything about you?"

"An' yet, I tell you again, you ought to know me well enough," she repeated.

"Yes—ay—now I guess. Oh, Gog, you rap! And havn't you the assurance of the mother of Beelzebub herself to come across my road, and stop my horse and me, in this manner? Let the bridle go, or I'll break this cudgel lamb-basting you!"

"It is sixteen years now, Masther Gaby, sence I opened my lips to you afore."

"And let it be seventy-six before you do it again, I advise you;—take away your hand, I tell you!" He made a blow at her knuckles, but missed them, nearly losing his own balance in the saddle at the same time.

"Masther Gaby, that beautiful little child—"

"Ha! Blur-an-fury! And you begin to talk of that now? You jade! Didn't I support the child, and you too, right well? Didn't I love the poor little creature? Didn't I promise, and didn't I intend to provide well for it? And didn't you make away with the innocent child? You did, you fagot!—you did, you unnatural brute, you did!"

"No, Masther Gaby; the child was stole frum me."

"The child was murdered, you mean! Murdered by its own mother! You Jezebel! I know it was! I'd swear it was! Leave my path! Quit my sight! Sixteen years ago, I cautioned you never to cross my path again, if you didn't want to be seized upon, and hanged for the murder of that poor infant!"

"I remimber your words well, Masther Gaby; an' frum that day to this, I never cum next or near you; bud it wasn't the fear of death that kep me away; it was, because I couldn't look in the father's face widout thinkin' of my beautiful darlin' that was taken frum me."

"Let go my bridle, or I'll ride over you!"

"Masther Gaby, many days won't pass, until I'll prove to you that I didn't murther my own child; an' enough said now, Masther Gaby, until that time comes about; bud I have a few more words to spake to you. You have another daughter—Masther Gaby, look well to your lawful daughther, or you'll lose her."

"What's that you say, you ould hell-hound? What's that you say?"

"I tell you," replied she, now letting go the horse's bridle, and stepping a little to one side of the road, while her voice lost its submissiveness, and became daring—"I tell you, Masther Gaby, that if you don't guard Miss Helen M'Neary like a jailor, you'll lose her."

"Curses on your bones! What do you mean?"

"I tell you that you'll lose her, if you dont guard her well; them were my words; an' I tell you now, into the bargain, that if you don't guard her well, she'll be very likely to take the road that I took whin I was a *colleen*, about her very age at present."

"Oh, you screech-owl! Oh, you damn'd liar!" and Gaby thumped his horse's sides with his heels, while he also smote them with his heavy stick, turning the animal's head towards Nelly Carty—"Oh, by the big Gog, I'll charge through you, you soothsayer! Oh, you prognosticator!"

"Let your horse stand where it is," she exclaimed. "It's fittier fur you to listen to all I have to say, than fly into that passion, and curse down curses that's enough to make the sky fall an' cover us; there, your poor horse has more sense nor yourself; see, he won't stir a step to hurt me. Listen now. What I'm goin' to say is as thrue as that I'm spakin', an' that you are there to hearken to me. Last night, your daughter—Miss Helen M'Neary, I mane—held a lonely meeting outside ov your house, in the counthry, wid a young man you know well—Ned Fennell by name—"

"You are a liar!" roared Gaby M'Neary—"a liar! a liar!"

"I am not a liar—I spake the blessed truth—she met him last night, in the little shrubbery, at the left side of the house—an' his arms war round your daughther—an' wid a kiss they met each other—an' wid a kiss they parted from each other—ay—ay—roar out at me again if you like

—bud all this is thrue—you thought he was in Dublin, far away from her—but that's the way they desave you.”

“Nelly Carty, I will not roar out at you now.” Gaby M'Neary's voice, and Gaby M'Neary's self, trembled as he spoke. “How did you come to know all this?”

“I watched them. I watched them close, close—I seen them wid my livin' eyes, in the shrubbery together. Watch your daughtther yourself, as close as I did, an' your own eyes 'll witness for you.”

Gaby M'Neary sat for an instant silent and motionless in his saddle. The furious working of his nerves were not, at all events, visible to the eye of Nelly Carty.

“An' I have a little more to tell you,” she resumed.

“Well, go on.”

“Sure he's to meet her agen, this very night, an' in the very same place.”

“And how do you know that too?”

“I hard 'em settlin' it wid ache other.”

“Very good,” said Gaby M'Neary.

At this period of the conference, a man with a wallet on his back, hobbled up the road, and passed very close to Nelly Carty; a something like a boy trotted at his heels. The potato-beggar started, peered after him for an instant, flew after him the next, seized him by the shoulders, turned him suddenly round, and stared into his very eyes.

“Help! give help here!” she cried, in frantic accents. “Help, Masther Gaby! I hould the man that stole the child sixteen years ago—an' that's come back here now to kill her, kill her! I know id, I know id! Nothing else brings him back. Help, help! to hould the murtherer!”

Robin Costigan exerted all his remaining strength to free himself, but his old friend held him firmly. Gaby M'Neary, overwhelmed as he was, by the tidings he had just heard, did not attend to Nelly's call. Impatient to be at home, that he might confront his daughter, he cudgelled his sober horse, until the poor animal's sides resounded under his blows. But the Babby, who for a moment had been only an observant looker-on, sprang to the assistance of his revered tutor. Seizing the arms of the beggar-woman from behind, while Robin Costigan still struggled his best with her in front, the vulture gripe of her fingers was soon loosed, while, at the same instant, her youthful assaulter

adroitly tripped up her heels, and then dragged and flung her into a ditch, half filled with water, by the road-side. Before she could recover herself, and contrive to scramble and splash out of it, the old robber had wound himself through a contiguous fence in the neighboring fields, and, closely followed by his helper, hobbled, with marvellous speed, in the direction of the river, which flowed through the valley, below the road, at some distance from him.

Nelly Carty gazed around her, in every direction, still feeling somewhat stunned and stupefied from her late harsh treatment. Robin Costigan was nowhere to be seen. Gaby M'Neary was also out of view. She held her head tightly between her hands, as if her thoughts were material, and that she could thereby compress them.

"Ay, ay," she despairingly muttered, "he is come back here, sure enough, to shed the blood of my own beautiful darlin'! Bud I'll stop his murthering hand, if there's a one born can do id!" And abandoning the potato-bag, which that day had cost her so much toil and trouble, she raced along the road, in the direction of the town.

"I'll be there afore him," she continued constantly to mutter, "I'll be there afore him, or death will sthrike me into a cowl'd hape on my road there!"

Not an instant did she slacken her great speed, until she arrived in the suburbs of the town, and stood before Father Connell's residence. The entrance-door being open, she rushed into the little yard, screaming out for her daughter—"Mary Carty, her daughther! Mary Carty, her own *colleen beg*, her own beautiful darlin'! her own *chorra-ma-chree*!"

The house-door was also open, and, her screams increasing, she broke into the quiet dwelling. Father Connell met her in the passage. She was not disrespectful to him—but she called on him to produce her child, and place her before her eyes. She wanted no more, she would ask no more; and let him only give her a sight of her child, safe and sound, and she would quit his house the moment after.

Astonished at her claiming Mary Cooney, as her daughter, but also greatly affected by her agony of grief, the priest soothingly assured her that Mary should immediately stand before her, and he sent Mrs. Molloy into her bedroom, to

summon her forth—the housekeeper informing him that it was there she was to be found, as, one or two hours before, she had retired thither with her book and her work. But Mary Cooney was not now in the bedroom. The potato-beggar shrieking high, in terror and anguish, ran to search the bedroom herself, then through and through the house, from top to bottom, she searched, but did not see her daughter.

She ran into the yard, the garden, the stable—she examined every corner—still without success. With outstretched arms, she fled from the priest's premises into the neighboring streets, hurrying from house to house, and questioning all she met for her "*own colleen beg*—her ould heart's darlin'"—but still and still the distraught mother found not her child.

And Father Connell and his housekeeper, also greatly alarmed for their poor young inmate, made vain search in every direction for her.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

MERCILESSLY belaboring his poor phlegmatic horse, with his heavy cudgel—fury in his eyes, and threats and curses on his frothy lips—Gaby M'Neary pushed on for his country-house. Arrived there, he thundered at its door, with his cudgel as well as with the knocker, so loudly, that the interior of the structure, from roof to cellar, rang and echoed again.

His very first peal had not concluded, when the door was pulled open by the boding and anxious Tom Naddy.

"Why have you kept me waiting so long, you unchristened whelp?" he asked, with lungs that filled the house, even more fearfully than his knocking had done, and at the same time, he dealt Tom Naddy a blow with his clenched fist, that spun him round as if he had been a cork.

Not pausing for an instant, he then went up stairs, punching down his stick, at every step he took, with a violence that might seem to say he would wound, and hurt

even the insensible timber he walked upon. He almost burst open the drawing-room door. Having let fall a book from her hands, his daughter, pale, and trembling very much, sat before him. She had heard the lion's roar, she had anticipated its meaning, and she awaited, in terror and confusion, his approach.

He hastened straight on to her. He fiercely seized her arm; she winced and wreathed under the pain of his tight grasp.

"Soh! soh! soh!—my lady—madam—you have disgraced your father!"

He chucked her upward on her feet; and shook her so violently that she must have fallen, but that the enraged man held her tottering figure partly erect by the arm, round which he still tightened his grip, with a pressure such as the jaws of a vice might have inflicted. Helen screamed from pain and terror.

"Oh, father!" she cried, "have pity!"

"Pity on you! pity on such a creature as you! Have you not disgraced me? Answer me that question! Will you—will you answer me? Am I the father of a base daughter? Answer me!"

"Oh, father! Oh, sir! I can scarcely utter a word, you so frighten me, and hurt me—oh, father, you will kill me!"

"Still, I say, answer me! Is your mother's daughter a degraded—a self-degraded wretch?"

"No, father, she is not!"

"Is she the vile refuse of the beggar's brat, Fennell? Is she?" his roar rose to a scream.

"No, father, she is not." Helen was now able to stand upright, without tottering, and her tears were fast drying on her blazing cheeks.

"Did the beggar's brat, Fennell, meet you outside my house last night? And were his arms around you! And did ye meet with a kiss, and with a kiss did ye part?—Answer me!"

"Father, dear father, I will not, I cannot tell you an untruth—I—"

"Then it is true! then ye did meet in secret—outside my house, and in the night-time? And ye met with a kiss, and with a kiss ye parted? Get from me, jade!"

He flung her to the floor, smiting her violently on the

cheek, as she dropped down. Outrageous passion is, for the time, outrageous madness.

He ground and gnashed his teeth—his eyes glared with insane fury; he hurried about, totally bereft of reason. He seized several of the frail little ornaments of the drawing-room, and pelted them against the wall, shivering them in pieces; he bellowed, imprecated, and cursed, like a veritable maniac.

His daughter lay motionless, upon her face, on the floor, and she was nearly as insensible as she was motionless. She heard his terrible voice, but knew not what he said. She felt a sense of immediate danger—of almost present death; but now understood nothing distinctly.

"Get up on your feet!" resumed her father, after some time. "Get up on your feet, or I'll trample on your disgraced carcass, while the life is in it! Get up this moment!"

With great pain and difficulty, Helen endeavored to obey her frantic parent. She rose, and resting both her hands upon the back of a chair, thus kept herself from again falling.

"And he is to come here again to-night," her father continued, grinning closely into her face, and speaking through his clenched teeth. "And you'll ask me again to-night, to go out and look at the moon—the chaste moon—as your poets call her—that is so fit for your admiration—and so fit a witness of *your* stolen meetings with the beggar! You have made another appointment with him for this very night—have you not? Hah! by the great heavens! he is skulking about my house this very moment!"

Thus interrupting himself, Gaby M'Neary started and listened. The gigantic watch-dog without began to bay furiously, setting up the peculiar angry bark, which seemed to denote that he was in almost immediate contact with an intruder.

Gaby M'Neary threw up the window, and looked out.

"Hullo, hullo, Bully! Hold him, boy! Hold him, Bully, until I come! Hullo, hullo, dog!" and his voice almost drowned that of the roaring brute he addressed.

He hurried into his bed-room, off the drawing-room. He issued back from it with a musket in his hands, which

was always kept carefully loaded. He quickly descended the stairs, to the hall, bellowing forth, on his way :—

"Hulloo, hulloo, Bully! Hold him fast! I'm coming! Hold the beggar's brat!—Hulloo, hulloo, dog! Hold him, hold him!"

He flung open the hall-door. At this moment, his daughter rushed staggering down the stairs, her hands clasped and clenched against her throat; her eyes and mouth wide open with terror—her hair dishevelled, and blood streaming over her cheek and neck, into her bosom. She flung herself on her knees before her father.

"Take *my* life," she said, "and spare *his*! I am his wedded wife! I am his lawful wife, as sure as my mother was your lawful wife! I am his wedded wife, and he is my wedded husband, and I can die to save him!"

"Hah! his wife? Die then, wife of the beggar! Die then, by the Heavens above me!"

The insane man pressed the muzzle of his musket to his daughter's forehead, and pulled at the trigger; she did not wince; but the piece was only half-cocked, and ere he could snatch back the cock, it was wrenched out of his hands by Tom Naddy, who instantly discharged it through the open hall-door, and then pitched it far into the lawn.

"Cur!—mongrel cur!" shrieked his insane master, now almost inarticulate from hoarseness and passion, while the thick clammy foam upon his lips also helped to make his utterance imperfect. "Mongrel cur! how durst you do that?"

"To save you," answered Tom Naddy, walking backward towards the door from which he had emerged into the hall, while his furious master advanced on him—"to save you, you misfortunate man, from doin' a murther upon your own child, that would banish the sleep from your eyes, till the day they would hang you for it;" and Naddy stepped inside the door-way, shut the door in his master's face, and locked it on the inside.

The baffled madman strove to kick it open. Failing in his attempt, he reapproached his daughter. She was still kneeling, now almost stupefied from exhaustion. "Up, up again!" he cried, once more clutching her arm, and forcing her up—"and begone from my house this moment! Quit it, and quit my sight for ever! Go to the beggar that you

call your husband! Go, keep your appointment with him—Get away! Begone, begone, jade! out of my house and my sight!”

Speaking thus, in disjointed words, he pushed her with both his hands across the hall, out at the door, and closed it with all his force upon her—the ponderous door, as it banged and clashed to, making a noise to which all the quiet places abroad re-echoed. The next instant Gaby M'Neary had fainted on the flags of the hall.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

HELEN had not spoken a word to her father, while the last shocking circumstances were occurring. With eyes fixed upon his face, not beseechingly, nor yet reproachfully, she only seemed to listen, with the utmost attention, to every word that came from his lips. He placed the barrier of the door between him and her; and though she staggered from the force of his push, ere he had done so, Helen remained standing. Outside the door, she continued listening intently, bending her ear towards it, as closely as possible. She did not hear her father's heavy fall, which was almost simultaneous with the thundering clash that accompanied her expulsion from his roof—and otherwise all was silent. Her father spoke no further words, and Helen concluded, must have retired from the hall to the parlor. Then she slowly knelt down; raised her clasped hands above her head, and, straining her eyes upwards, muttered:—

“I give praises and thanks to my God in heaven! my father has not cursed me!”

She stood up and looked around her. It was a drizzly night, and the moon but imperfectly risen and wholly clouded; and there stood Helen, wearing only her slight evening dress, and bare-headed, and bleeding, and now shivering with cold, as well as from utter wretchedness, an outcast, she thought, from human shelter or sympathy. Again she strained her sight in every direction; the form

of him whom her eyes sought, now her only protector, was not anywhere to be seen. She started at a sudden recollection of his seeming to have come in contact with the ferocious watch-dog ; perhaps the savage animal had torn him and killed him ; and she looked with shrinking horror on and about the spot, where to judge from the dog's position, when he barked and yelled, the evil must have happened. Nothing was to be seen ; and she uttered another thanksgiving. She descended the few steps from the hall-door, and again stood still, on the gravel before the lawn ; and once more peered round her through the darkness ; but still her scrutiny was in vain. Gradually, and almost unconsciously, she walked away from her former home, often timidly stopping, and calling on her husband's name.

Hasty steps sounded coming after her, as if from the house : she turned eagerly round. Her father might have relented, and sent somebody to bring back to his hearthstone his only child. It was Tom Naddy who approached her. He held a bundle in his hand, for the contents of which he had sent her maid into Helen's apartments. He produced from it a bonnet and cloak, and obtained permission from Helen to assist her, in covering her head and person from the night wind, and the penetrating mist. Other things were in the bundle, which he carefully tied up, and handed to his young mistress. She passively allowed him to adjust her cloak, and it was almost mechanically that she took the bundle from him.

She inquired for her father.

He had shut himself up in his bedroom, Tom said, after calling for wine, and he would let no one near him, but kept walking up and down the apartment. And this was true ; although Tom made no allusion to Gaby M'Neary's having fainted in the hall, nor to his, Tom's, efforts to restore him to his senses.

"An' you'll meet the young masther, mam," said Tom, "afore you go far, plase God ; an' put all that about the dog an' himself out ov your head, fur no such thing happened, mam. You know the way to the river-side, don't you, mam ?"

Helen answered that she thought she did.

"Well, mam, the moon, God bless her, 'ill soor be up,

an' she'll guide you. Isn't id the river-side way the young masther is to come to-night, mam?"

Helen answered that it was.

"Well, mam, sure you can't fail to meet wid him; an' I'd go wid you, mam, to be company to you on the way, only I know, I can do bettther fur you an' the young masther by stayin' in the house; besides, if the ould masther was to come to miss me out now, I'd have no chance ov gettin in agen; but sure God will guard you, an' guide you, as well as the moon, mam, an' bettther; an' as soon as ever I can folly ather you, I will, mam. An' make straight fur the river-side, an' I'll be bail, you'll soon meet wid one that will be a comfort to you."

"Naddy!"

"Yis, mam."

"You'll mind every word my father says, and you'll report every word truly to me?"

"I will indeed, mam."

"Every syllable he utters, Tom—every syllable he utters. Promise me solemnly—every syllable he utters."

"I give you the promise, mam; and I'll mind every syllable that comes out of his mouth."

"And Tom, be sure, Tom, to mark well, if my father lays his curse upon me!"

"He won't do id, mam. You'll find he won't—God forbid he should."

"Amen, amen to that, Tom! But, be on the watch for me:—the path to the river-side, you say?"

"Yis, mam, fur that's the way the young masther 'ill come, mam."

"Oh, yes, now I recollect; but it is very dark, and somehow, I cannot see as well as usual, but that is not to be wondered at.—Good-night."

"Don't go too far anyhow, mam; if you don't meet the young masther very soon intirely, sit down an' wait for me, mam; an' I'll race ather you, an' overtake you, as soon as ever I can quit the house agen, wid safety to us all."

"Very well, Tom—good-night."

"May the Lord be wid you, mam; an' the good-night kindly to you, mam."

Tom, running towards the house, was soon lost to her view; and Helen, with her bundle on her arm, but uncon-

scious that she held it, proceeded on her way to the river-side.

From the effects of the fall of the heavy mist, the path she chose was miry and clinging, and almost at every step, her feet nearly slid from under her. She had gone but a short distance, when one of her slight slippers fastened in the clay, and shortly afterwards she lost the other. She went on, almost on her bare feet, over stiles and fences; the rough stones of the tortuous path, and the stumps and briars of the fences, often coming in contact with them and causing them to bleed. Two or three times she fell, and was severely bruised; and then there was the miserable consciousness of floundering through mud or wet grass, and briars, in the endeavor to regain her upright position. And yet, she made way against every obstacle with a singular pertinacity. Her mind was, in fact, in a state of wretched confusion. It seemed to her, as if the hands of her angry father were, with resistless force, continually pushing her forward; and she felt a sensation of utter abandonment, because no other arm was offered to support her.

At length, the physical power to go farther quite failed Helen, and she sat down, from sheer exhaustion, not knowing the distance she had proceeded, or indeed the course she had taken. Then, it was a mercy to her that she wept, and wept profusely; by the indulgence of her tears, nature was relieved, and the exercise of her reason in some degree restored to her.

And then too, for the first time, did she feel the hurts she had received, and confessed to herself the feebleness of her body; while also for the first time did she cast her eyes around her, in a reasoning effort to ascertain where she was.

The moon was now rapidly rising higher, and the pall of dingy clouds which had heretofore shrouded the whole arch overhead, was rolling itself up and away, leaving only some torn and loose fragments behind it; and the stars twinkled through deep blue; and the edges of these portions of vapor, nearest to the moon, began to assume a weak silvery tinge. The night was clearing up, in fact, and likely to become fine and lightsome.

But it was in vain that Helen, now capable of profiting by this favorable change, endeavored to renew an acquaint-

ance with the objects around : they were strange, or nearly so to her ; she had strayed, in fact, from the river-side path, in some direction not familiar to her perceptions ; and yet she now called to mind that it was the river-side path branching to the house she had intended to take, in order to meet her husband.

"Heaven protect me!" she ejaculated, "we shall miss each other, and I fear I must perish if I am left much longer without assistance.

Raising herself up, as well as she was able, Helen now listened anxiously for the sound of an approaching foot-step. She only heard the noise of falling water straight before her ; but even that was a slight relief. She knew that at this point the river was crossed by a weir, whence continued another path to the town, with which she was well acquainted ; if once upon that path, she might succeed in gaining the town, and then her husband might be made aware of her situation ; but how far was the river from her ? And by what way was it approachable ? She peered through the distance, half-chequered with the weak moonlight—fences and other obstructions were between her and the sound she heard ; these difficulties she could not expect to overcome, and she again sank down despairingly.

The next moment, however, as the thought of the long, long night came upon her, she once more started up, and tottered in the direction of the river. The noise of the falling water grew more distinct. The clouds had now almost entirely passed away from the moon, which, quietly mounting higher and higher in the heavens, flung her almost perfect light over the open country ; and gaining a little courage from this seemingly good omen, Helen, with increased pain and suffering, slowly proceeded on her course. She passed two fields, crossing their dividing fences with the utmost difficulty. She reached the summit of a third boundary ; the noise of the weir came with certainty upon her ear, and she was sure that she saw the moonbeams glittering and dancing over the white foamy water which the barrier caused. She praised God again, and scrambled, and sometimes crawled forward, on hands and knees. One field only remained between her and the river-side, and that was a rapid descent.

Suddenly, men's voices, in angry discussion, fixed her attention, and the sound seemed to arise between her and the very point she had to attain. This was terrible—instinctively, she looked round for a hiding-place. Above where she stood was a little hollow, on the hill side, partially screened by briars and bushes. To it she crept, and down into it, again lacerating herself with thorns and broken branches; and crouching among the bushes, listened, with all her powers of hearing, to the very voices that filled her with horror. She had lost, without attending to the loss, her bundle, her bonnet, and even her cloak.

The loud talking ceased, and there was but one man's voice now heard, but this one was fearfully harsh and abrupt. Then female tones, in prayer and expostulation, mingled with it; then female screams, shrill, long, and piercing, rang through the night air; and then, Helen heard the noise of a heavy blow, and the long shrieks suddenly stopped, subsiding into a low, melancholy cry, followed by deep, deep moans; and a second blow, accompanied by a hissing sound of the human breath, such as workmen utter, when they labor with the hatchet. Perfect silence ensued, for a short time, only interrupted by the whispering of the night-breeze through the grass, and through the bushes, and by the gentle fall of water, near at hand.

Oh, that was a pause of thrilling horror to Helen! for, above all her previous suffering, fear, and confusion, the conviction that she had overheard the doing of a murder, curdled her pure heart's blood, and made her very soul cower within her!

Hasty footsteps entered the little hollow, and paused within a few feet of where she lay concealed.

"This is the place that the ould divil bid us wait for him," said a hoarse, deep voice but in cautious tones.

"It is," answered another person—and the two words were spoken with a shudder.

"That was a black act," continued the first voice.

"Oh, it was a bloody deed! Oh, the thought of this night will never lave my mind, never, never! I wouldn't wish for all the world's coin, if 'twas laid before me this moment, that I didn't stop the hand of that hell-bird! Oh,

she was a darlin', poor young crature! Why didn't we save her, Paul?"

"That oath! that frightful oath!"

"I'd break fifty oaths if I had the power of savin' her over agen, or if I could bring back the life to my poor beautiful Mary—I would—I would," and the man whom his confreres called Moloch, or the wicked, suddenly stopped speaking, for his throat filled up to suffocation, and a throe of very agony was laboring in his black bosom.

"Bud her blood isn't on our hands, Dinnis?"

"No. Bud curses be on our cowardly hands that didn't save her!"

"Unless we tuk ould Darby's life, an' buried him wid the weight of a hill's clay lying on his body, what use would there be in savin' her to-night, Dennis? He'd meet her agen, an' he'd have his revenge; an' you know there's others to stand by Darby the divil; so that we couldn't be safe frum him or them—"

"If id was to be done agen, I'd save her, if he called up forty red divils to his side!"

"Husth! he's comin' on us—There's no use in vexin' him, Dinnis."

The only answer Dennis made, was conveyed by dalving his heel into the sod, and folding his arms tightly across his breast.

Robin Costigan rapidly hobbled up the little ascent from the river, closely followed by the Babby; and Helen, in her hiding-place, could hear the puffing of his hyena breath, as he stood close to her.

"Is the horse an' car at the cross-roads?" he questioned.

"It is there, an' Terry is guardin' id," answered Dennis.

"An' the kishes* turned mouth to mouth in id, as I tould ye?"

"An' the kishes, as you tould us."

"Babby!"

The familiar called came near, and looked up into the eyes of his superior. The full radiance of the moon shone on the face of the boy-monster, revealing the spots and dashes of blood upon it.

"Babby! get the bundle we left behind us—an' hurry!"

* Kish—a shallow, oblong oater basket, open at top, and sitting close into the car."

—ye must be at the house by day-dawn, an' be out of id agin in a hand's time, if the horse dropped down dead fur id—I'll go my own way afther ye—hurry, hurry!"

The Babby parted with his arm the bushes and briars that shaded Helen's place of concealment, and towards which he had been glancing. Instantly he stood transfixed, as if changed into stone, and he stared as if his eyes would fly from their sockets.

"Hurry, hurry! Didn't I bid you hurry?" growled Costigan's voice, dangerously.

The well known accents of authority half broke the spell which had bound the precocious villain; he jumped backward, clutched his dreaded master by the arm, and with quivering fingers, pointed towards Helen's hiding-place.

"What's the matther?" questioned Costigan, himself shivering.

"We left her below on the bank—dead—stone dead," whispered his pupil, "an' yet, now she is in there—in there."

"Who? who is there?"

"Mary—Mary—that we killed—is in there—I saw her sittin' in id—her eyes wide open, lookin' at me—ay, I saw her—the blood over her cheek too—ay, I saw her."

Robin Costigan advanced, and in turn drew back the screen of wild bushes—

"An' don't you see her yourself?" continued the Babby. "Yis, an' by hell's fire, that other—that ould woman is at her back now!"

But Costigan beheld only the horror-stricken and very nearly unconscious Helen, sitting behind the screen, her knees crippled up against her chest; her clenched hands resting on them; her neck and chin bent forward, and her eyes distended, without once winking.

Her great resemblance to her half-sister, poor Mary Cooney, had deceived the conscience-stricken and most unnatural boy; but Robin Costigan was not so taken by surprise. Only for a moment he gazed at Helen—and then seized her, and dragged her forth from her little retreat.

In dreams, while the most terrific circumstances are presented to the fancy, the greatest degree of horror we experience is when we make vain efforts to scream out our agony. Such was the sensation which now oppressed

Helen. A shriek would have relieved the freezing terror of her heart, but she could not utter it; no—nor could she make even one struggle, one show of resistance; and a moment after, everything was whirl around her—her heart seemed to burst from its own tightness; and observation and sense quite forsook her. Robin Costigan knew well who she was. Neither was he ignorant of the relationship existing between her and Mary Cooney.

"What are you doin' there? What did you hear, or what did you see, while you were there?" he questioned; but Helen answered not; her eyes closed, her knees bent, and she was supported in Costigan's loathsome arms, while he scowled into her face, and showed symptoms of a renewal of the tragedy which had been perpetrated at the river-side.

But Molochth interfered, and swore it should not be.

"She'll hang us—hang us—" growled his chief.

"There's enough of blood spilt," answered Dennis Keegan, "an' fur poor Mary's sake, no finger shall harum this colleen."

"What do you say—what do you say?" questioned Costigan.

"I say that if I tuk you by the heels, Darby the divil—an' I'm sthrong enough to do id,—I say, that if I tuk you by the heels, an' put your brains upon that rock, no harum shall come to her."

"I hear you—I hear you," muttered Robin, and there was a threat in his words and tone.

"Heed me, then," retorted the mutineer.

"Here—carry her to the kishes."

Molochth frowned at him. But Paul Finigan remonstrated with his surly comrade, representing that if Helen was left behind, detection of the murder of Mary Cooney must certainly take place before they could retire, as they had arranged, to a remote extremity of the kingdom, where the rest of their community awaited them; that they might be careful of their prisoner for a while, and then release her; and above all, he whispered that it would be a fatal step to irritate Darby Cooney too far. Molochth yielded to this reasoning. During the short conference, Costigan had been silent and observant.

"Take her to the kishes," he once more commanded.

"Bud no harum is to come to her—mind that—" insisted Molooth.

"Take her—take her from me—an' curses on her an' you!"

Helen was accordingly borne, by the two men, to the "cross-roads," about a quarter of a mile distant, and there deposited by them in the wicker kish, upon some damp straw. Another kish was placed over this one, bottom uppermost, and well secured in its place with ropes. Then the vehicle moved rapidly off.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

Mrs. MOLLOY had truly related, that on the evening when Nelly Carty sought the beggar-girl at the priest's house, Mary had retired into her bed-room, with her books and her work.

But her mind was not with either. She moved her lips mechanically, and uttered low, mumbling sounds, as she endeavored to commit her task to memory; or she bent her eyes on her old patron's surplice, and strove to add a sprig or a leaf to its simple embroidery—no use. Her heart still fluttered with the ruffling agitation of the day before. She recurred, again and again, to all the details of the visit of Edmund Fennell's young wife; to the features, the person, the manner, the sweet address, the sweet accents, and the everything fascinating of her successful rival; and then she reflected how very, very happy Edmund must be in the possession of such a bride; and she schooled herself, while tears came gush, gush from her eyes, to pray for a continuation of that happiness to him, and for countless blessings upon them both.

A great yearning to see Edmund Fennell mixed, however, every moment, with her reveries. Mary would give the wide world just to see him once more alone, and to tell him about the new acquaintance she had formed, and how beautiful his young wife was, and how grand, and how kind, and friendly—there surely could be no harm in wanting to speak with him, only for that. Indeed, and

indeed, and God himself could witness, she had no other motive. But Edmund was in Dublin, far, far away—Mary believed, almost as far away as the end of the world from her, and from every one that loved him ; so it was no use thinking any further about the matter.

At that moment, Edmund Fennell, his head and eyes intently cast down, passed rapidly by her window. Yielding to instantaneous impulse, Mary snatched up her little, coarse straw bonnet and her cloak, and really and truly without a defined intention, and in perfect innocence of heart, stole through the house on tip-toe, through the house-door, and through the yard-door, leaving both open after her, as Nelly Carty had found them, and then walked along the suburb street, towards the country, in Edmund's track.

After clearing this suburb street, Edmund Fennell, without looking to the right or to the left, had advanced about half-a-mile along the river-side, or near to it. Mary as yet kept at some distance behind him. There was now a level meadow to his one hand, extending to the water's brink, and immediately to his other hand, a grove crossed the hill side, through which wound the beaten pathway. In this spot Mary Cooney ran forward to overtake him. He heard her rapid, light footsteps behind him,—he turned, and instantly encountered poor Mary, flushed and panting, from the excitement and unusual effort of her race, and laughing and crying together, from her emotions. Unable to speak a word, she clung to his arm. In low and gentle tones, Edmund at first inquired why she had thus followed him. Still deprived of the power of distinct utterance, Mary replied, in gasps, that she could not tell ; only her eye had caught him passing by the priest's house, and she had run out just to see him and to speak with him—it was so very, very long since they had had a word together—and to walk a bit at his side, through the green fields, and by the shining river, and—here Mary's breath again quite failed her.

Edmund gently expostulated with her ; pointing out the unseemliness of their being thus observed together. She wept, and still clung to his arm. He called to mind what business he had in hand ; he looked at his watch—there was now scarcely time to be punctual in his appointment

with Helen ; and, in a voice and manner less gentle, though still only energetic, he again exhorted Mary to release his arm, and leave him free to walk on as fast as he could ; respect for herself, he said, even her sense of delicacy, ought to tell her she was acting wrong. Besides, he had a pressing engagement, and must keep it.

Mary now wept outright ; she could well conjecture what engagement he meant, and upon mere natural impulse clung closer to him. Time still lapsed, Edmund's voice sounded high, and perhaps harshly, though he did not intend it. Suddenly, though even yet not ungently, he freed himself of his poor follower, and the instant he had done so, ran forward with as much speed as he could.

Mary, after standing an instant alone, grew giddy and weak, and dropped on the grass. Soon getting a little better, she listened for the sound of his retreating footsteps ; they came not on her ear ; it was deep twilight, and she could not at all get a glimpse of his figure. And now, half sitting up, the force of her original feelings towards Edmund, little checked for the moment by the discipline they had lately undergone, took possession of poor Mary's bosom, and she began to give vent, in loud lamentations, to her sense of abandonment and hopelessness—clapping her hands, and rocking her body to and fro.

The fit in a degree subsided ; she jumped up and looked about her. But no thought of home came into her head ; no thought of Mrs. Molloy's fireside, or of her evening sitting with Father Connell, or of her needlework, or of her books for Mick Dempsey ; and she at length mechanically and stupidly wandered forward in the direction which Edmund had taken, without purpose and without hope.

She soon grew weary, and tired, and cold, and wet, from the falling mist, and the keen breeze of the autumn evening. She again looked round her. The river was still near at hand, but she had never before been so far along its banks. Home now slightly occurred to her ; but she did not want to go home so soon ; she sat down on a large stone ; and here, along with all her agitation of mind, all her young love's despair, all her weariness, her shivering, and the almost drenching she had encountered, another

passion began to seize upon Mary's heart ; and that passion was fear ! deadly, sickening fear, in her present lonely and unprotected situation. Terrible fear—her old fear—her fear of Darby Cooney !

And at that very moment, Darby Cooney's eye was upon her—he was watching her from a hiding-place, as she sat on the large stone. Her own mother, Nelly Carty, had sent him down to meet her at the river-side, by interrupting his course on the high-road, towards the conclusion of her interview with Gaby M'Neary.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

NED FENNEL rapidly proceeded on his way. He arrived at the place agreed on, between Helen and himself, for their meeting. She was not there. For a long time, he awaited her coming ; she did not come. Oppressed with forebodings of evil, Edmund, after a lengthened watching, left the spot, and came within view of Gaby M'Neary's little villa. Here all was dark, stilly, and sad, with the exception of the windows of the bed-room which he knew to be occupied by the master of the house. None of the others had a gleam of light in them ; but in this one candles burned brightly ; and across the linen blinds, which were drawn down, he could see pass and repass the shade of Gaby M'Neary's figure. Vainly did he bend his eyes to detect light or sound in Helen's sleeping-chamber. He stole to the rear of the house. Still all was dark and dimly silent. He returned to its front. Gaby M'Neary was still pacing up and down his room. He went back to the place of appointed rendezvous—it was lonely. Again he visited the house ; again he saw Gaby M'Neary's shadow flit from window to window—but nothing more. And thus he spent the livelong night walking from the ground of appointment to the house, and from the house back again to it ; and still, Gaby M'Neary's shade—as if it had been his veritable ghost, troubled after death, on account of his own monstrous cursing and swearing while in

the flesh, appeared on the window-blinds ; and there was nought else to afford him subject for observation.

The day dawned. It was twilight. The earliest rising bird, the robin, sang a little ballad, in the joy of the coming day ; the little wren next began his chirp, in the green hedge ; anon from their far-off rookery, came the serious industrious crows, cawing and croaking, and giving all kinds of directions, and making all kinds of signals to each other, as they heavily winged their way, in line of march, above Edmund's head ; and, ere the sun's rays glanced upwards, over the heavens, imbuing the clouds with gradations of vermilion color, from dense to sober, from sober to glorious, the lark sprung up from his nest—

“—and to morning's gate,
Soared the god to gratulate.”

And then, they were all awake ; all the birds, the little and the greater, all that can sing, or utter a cry, or a note ; the swift, the martin, and the swallow, darting like arrows through the air, and twittering as they shot along ; the thrush and the blackbird whistling and gurgling forth their songs ; the piping bullfinch ; the chaffinch, with his monotonous couplet ; the gay linnet, with his prolonged piece of music ; the impudent sparrow, with his bold and noisy chirping ; the goldfinch, with his loud and excelling melody ; the yellow hammer, with his musical call ; the hedge-sparrow, the lonely tenant of the hedge, with his single sad note ; the jackdaw, daw, dawing, but still doing his best to give utterance to his pert and frisky satisfaction ; nor must even the Sir Motley of the open fields, the magpie, be forgotten, although his voice of joy broke forth only in a most pragmatistical jabber ; all, all the birds were awake, and up, and out, and doing.

Upon no former morning, during his whole past life, could Edmund Fennell have been uninfluenced by those sights and sounds, and all the other sights and sounds of early morning around him ; often had they had the power, acting upon his sympathising and ready spirit, of making him jump high and shout out with very joy. Now he heard them not—he saw them not. Fears for the safety of his young wife possessed him, to the full exclusion of every

other interest. Her father's rage had suddenly overtaken her in some shape or other, too horrible to conjecture ; and her private marriage with him was the cause of the calamity. So he could only loiter and linger near the house, or in the place named for the meeting, long after the morning broke, and until the broad glory of full day warned him, that a longer delay must expose him to disagreeable observation.

He then paced towards the river-side, in deep and troubled thought ; and, still absorbed in painful reflection, he came near to a little crowd of ten or more persons, before he was aware of their proximity. He glanced at them observantly for a moment. Some were discoursing eagerly, and with excited gestures ; while the greater number listened with countenances of terror-stricken interest.

Edmund recollected his soiled and, it must be haggard, appearance, the result of a night spent in agitation, without repose, and in the wet and miry fields ; and not wishing to attract notice, in such a trim, he turned from the men, re-crossed the stile which he had just come over, and keeping to the right, continued stealthily by a high and close hedge—still on his way towards the town, however. The hedge ran up a rising ground, but ended at the top of the ascent ; he became exposed to the view of the persons whose eyes he wished to avoid, and he continued his way, running. To his great astonishment, these people shouted after him, and amid their shouts or their loud talking with one another, Edmund thought he could catch the sound of his own name, pronounced in angry accents. He looked and listened. The crowd, now increasing in numbers, were in rapid motion towards him, and certainly called out to him by name, and threateningly commanded him to stop. He did stop, and fully confronted them, still in great wonder. Nearer and nearer they came, making a great clamor, addressing him in opprobrious language, and uttering shrill and hooting shouts. They closed upon him, and struck at him. He defended himself against the fierce, and to him, unaccountable aggression, but was soon overpowered. They threw him on his back on the ground, and bound his arms.

"What do you mean?" he asked, amidst the deafening clamor, "what have I done?"

Twenty voices answered together. "You know well what you've done! You have done a frightful murder!" and they groaned at him in the guttural accents of detestation.

Through all their noise, a single whisper pierced its way into his ear, distinctly uttering the following words:—

"Will you stand by the gallows' foot, now, an' Robin Costigan swinging on it?"

He turned his head, and looked keenly in the direction whence the whisper came; it had been uttered by one of the men who leaned over him, holding him down on his back; this person having jumped up, was now shuffling away through the crowd. Edmund called on the people to seize him, but his voice was drowned in the uproar of threats and revilings directed against himself; and when, perforce, he was obliged to march towards the town, surrounded by his captors, Edmund vainly sought to discover, in the angry faces of those around him, the never-to-be-forgotten features of his inveterate, self-vowed enemy, Robert Costigan.

Bruised and bleeding, from the blows he had received—bareheaded too, for his hat had fallen off in the scuffle—bound with ropes—his dress torn, almost to tatters—and preceded and followed by a yelling crowd, that every instant augmented, Edmund Fennell was conveyed along the streets of his native town.

As they passed through the populous suburb, men, women, and children came out in hundreds to meet him, and, when they had learned the cause of his being a prisoner, to shout at him with the rest—to groan at him, abuse him, and execrate him.

He was taken to the house of the chief magistrate. The gravity of the charge brought against him ensured a speedy investigation of it; and before seven o'clock that morning the accused was formally committed to prison to stand his trial for his life, in the course of the same day, before the judge whom Gaby M'Neary had gone to attend as grand juror upon the previous one.

His sudden capture, the severe ill-treatment he had received, his rapid committal to jail, together with his preceding agitation on Helen's account, and his sleepless and restless night—everything had so stunned Edmund Fennell,

that he could scarcely attend to the evidence adduced against him before the magistrate. Now, in his lonesome cell, his mind began slightly to settle, and to comprehend the magnitude of his danger, and he could recur somewhat more distinctly to that evidence.

There had been unseen witnesses of his interview with Mary Cooney, late on the previous evening.

It will be recollected that she had come up with him at a point where a grove, ascending a hill, was to his one hand, and the river with a spread of level sward between it and him to his other hand. On the immediate verge of the water, two men were at this moment reclining. They were engaged angling with lines, and thus at their ease inertly watched the progress of their sport.

These men had observed the meeting between the beggar-girl and her young benefactor. Too distant to overhear the conversation of the youthful pair, they could understand, however, that, in the very first instance, the girl wished to remain with Ned Fennell, and that he wished to part from her. When Edmund's voice rose high, they caught its accents, though still not the words he spoke; but they noticed well his separating poor Mary's clinging hands from his arm, his sudden and quick retreat, her as sudden fall upon the grass, which they believed and swore to have been caused by his violence; and then her sobs and cries distinctly reached them; and finally they saw her wander along the path which Edmund had taken, until she was quite lost to their view. And in conclusion, they swore that, from the tones of his voice, and from his angry gestures at parting from her, the young man had, to the best of their belief, addressed threatening words to the young girl.

The body was not discovered on the spot where, evidently, murder had been perpetrated—evidently according to all the evidence. For on that spot was a stone, smeared with blood, and near it a lock of long, shining hair had been found, also clotted with blood; the sward around was much trodden and trampled, and close to the water, on the bank above, was an impression in the grass—plainly one made by a recumbent female figure; while round the imprint of the head, and defining its form, appeared a mass of coagulated gore.

Then, Ned Fennell had been absent from his home all the night, and he was seized near the scene of the murder, while in the very act of returning to it, doubtless, after having conveyed the corpse of his victim to some place of concealment not yet ascertained—and returning to it for the purpose of obliterating all marks and proofs of his abominable crime. And the appearance of his attire proved that he had spent the hours of darkness prowling in muddy places, while the expression of his face suggested that he had recently undergone fatigue and agitation; and what but guilt could have made him skulk away, from the group of persons at the river-side, and creep along the hedges, and run fast when they first called to him?

There were, indeed, no marks of blood upon him; but those he must have washed away, for his clothes were quite wet.

On this evidence Edmund Fennell was committed for trial. Little more than an hour elapsed, however, when additional facts were brought against him, which, in the public eye, fully proved him a murderer.

Gaby M'Neary had, the previous night, turned his only daughter and only child out of his house, in consequence of discovering a private intimacy between her and Ned Fennell. This Gaby himself was authority for. The lock of hair found near the blood-covered stone, and which evidently had been torn by force from the wearer's head, he at once recognised as being of the exact color and texture of his daughter's hair. In the little hollow on the hill side, a cloak and bonnet were discovered; also a bundle containing articles of female dress—all of which he knew, and got others to prove, to have been the property of Helen M'Neary. The cloak and bonnet were shown to the men who had observed the meeting between Edmund Fennell and an unknown young person the evening before; and although they could not swear to the color or texture of these matters, still, to the best of their belief, they were the self-same cloak and bonnet which the girl had on. Helen M'Neary, then, was the individual murdered by Edmund Fennell. Search had been made for her in every direction; but "tale or tidings" of her no one could supply. And after her expulsion from her father's house she had gone to seek her seducer, and either throw herself

upon his protection, or upbraid him as the author of her misfortunes; and she met with him by chance by the river-side, and he flung her off and ran from her, and she followed him, and it must be, again overtook him; and then irritated by her continued reproofs, and giving way to what must have been a long-lurking change in his feelings towards her, the former ardent and successful lover freed himself, by the alternative of murder, of his now hated victim.

CHAPTER XL.

It is not in the power of language to convey, even remotely, a notion of the overwhelming horror, that tumbled down upon Edmund Fennell, as this new evidence was communicated to him. He had fixed it as certain in his own mind that, after parting from Mary Cooney, she had been encountered and murdered by Robin Costigan. All his recollections of the old villain's threats to the poor beggar-girl, and the indistinct vision caught of him, while Edmund lay bound and prostrate among his captors, plausibly confirmed the truth of this conclusion; and, apart from his own sufferings and danger, he experienced many a bitter pang, while contemplating the supposed fate of his unhappy young friend.

But now it seemed certain, that his own wife had been the victim of the mysterious tragedy! And that he, he was accused as the shedder of her blood! And yet, that was nothing: nay, he was almost glad of it, for in horror, in despair, and in prostration of heart and mind, he grimly felt that public exposure, public revilings, and a public death upon the gallows, were now necessary to suit and to end his inexpressible sense of misery.

There is an old saying—"when a man is down, down with him;" and Edmund Fennell soon proved it to be a truism. Anticipated condemnation was universal against him. No word of pity for his situation was spoken from one to another, throughout his native city; and not one

voice was raised in doubt of the guilt of a formerly esteemed, and well-conducted young person.

In his prison, no friendly face appeared to offer him counsel or consolation. Under favor of the jailor, indeed, many came to gaze at him ; but, although Edmund could recognise some intimate acquaintances among those curious persons, none of them now stepped forth to offer him the hand of fellowship ; but they scowled at him, or else gaped half in fear, upon the haggard murderer.

The hour for his trial drew near. The jailor appeared to warn him of the fact, and to advise him to send for a legal person to prepare his defence. Edmund started at the official stupidity. His mind was one whirl of confusion and dismay ; and he could scarcely understand what he was asked to do. But at length comprehending that he was exhorted to take friendly counsel of some one, he desired that Father Connell, and Tom Naddy might be sent for. This request was granted ; but the messenger soon returned to say, that the priest was distant in the country since daybreak that morning ; and that Tom Naddy had quitted his master's house, and was nowhere to be heard of.

The jailor again proposed that an attorney should be called in, with all dispatch—adding that the grand jury, in the court-house above their heads, had found true bills against Edmund, and that his indictment was in progress of being made out ; so that, therefore, not an instant was to be lost. An attorney accordingly attended the accused ; and to him Edmund over and over again said—"I am innocent ! I am totally innocent of this hideous charge. As God lives and hears me, I am innocent !" But he could not bring his mind further to commune with his legal adviser. The gentleman put questions in detail to him ; he answered only by bewailing the loss of his young wife, and wringing his hands, and shuddering at the thoughts of her horrid death.

The attorney quitted his cell, and in strict confidence told the first person who asked him a question on the subject, that he would do all in his power for the young fellow, but that he feared with little chance of success ; and very knowingly he shook his head as he made this declaration.

About two hours more went by, and, true to his prog-

nostic, the jailor came to conduct Edmund up to the court-house. After traversing some narrow dark passages, they arrived at a flight of spiral steps, ascended it—and through a trap-door, Edmund suddenly found himself emerged into the dock of the city-court—a sea of heads before him and around him—his judge, clothed in scarlet and ermine straight before him—the galleries also thronged with human faces to his front and to either hand—and every face turned to him—and the hosts of cold detesting eyes fixed on him—a freezing firmament of eyes, poor Edmund vaguely thought.

He was stunned for an instant, and staggered towards the side of the dock.

“And is it Robin Costigan they are goin’ to thry fur his life to-day!” asked a voice, in a whispering under-growl, close to him.

He jumped round, but again failed to catch a sight of certain well-known features.

The jailor called him to stand forward at the bar. His jury were being sworn, he said, and this was the time for his challenges, if he had any to make.

Edmund really did not understand; but he answered “No; he had no challenges to make; he had nothing to object to any one.”

It may be asserted that the anticipated public condemnation, out of doors, accompanied the very jury into their box;—that in fact, they had already, each in his own breast, agreed on their verdict. A few there might have been amongst them, who, as they looked at the pale ghastly lad, still in his soiled and torn attire, and his toilet wholly unattended to, because wholly unthought of, said to themselves—“we must divest ourselves of our prejudice;” but this very resolve to guard against their prejudice, only proved its existence.

The trial proceeded. The evidence given before the magistrate was now repeated against the arraigned prisoner at the bar. Edmund seemed to attend to what was going on; but his mind was, for the most part, far away—summoning up before itself a horrid and revolting picture of Helen’s murder, by the lonely river-side. A slip of paper reached him from an unknown person, and was delivered into his hands by the jailor. Edmund read upon

it, "Has the prisoner no counsel?" He replied, speaking to the jailor, "No—not one," and took no further notice of the matter. The jailor telegraphed the meaning of this answer to a young gentleman, sitting near the evidence table, who immediately rose, and addressed the court. He was a briefless barrister, just "called," and "going circuit," upon the vague hope of being, some time or other, engaged in some case or other, by some attorney or other. But the briefless young barrister had a feeling heart, if not professional notoriety; and this, joined with a little laudable ambition to make himself known in any way, now caused him, as has been said, to address the judge.

"My lord," he began, "the unhappy young prisoner at the bar not having counsel engaged, I will act for him, if he and your lordship are satisfied."

The jailor whispered Ned Fennell, and again nodded assentingly to the volunteer counsel; the judge, after a wide distension of his cheeks, and the emission of a long puff of breath, also nodded.

"Then, my lord, I have at once to submit, that the prisoner having been called on to plead against a charge of murder which no one saw him commit, and which even cannot be proved to have been committed at all—for the case for the prosecution has just closed, without either attempt at such proof having been made—"

"My lord," interrupted a little sharp-faced gentleman, hopping up from the seats assigned to the prosecuting counsel—"I beg Mr. A—a—a's pardon; but if he will have a little patience, he may find much of his sagacity anticipated; we have not formally closed our case, my lord; and we paused a moment only to consider a new piece of evidence—"

"New evidence," said his lordship, with an additional glow of red, visible even over his always red face, and his grey eyes sparkled with satisfaction—"new evidence? Go on with it."

The poor briefless young barrister sat down, crest-fallen. James Rafferty was called to the witness-table. A strange-looking boy presented himself,—one whom no one regarded with pleasure or comfort. He was quite unknown in the town or neighborhood, he said; a fatherless and mother-

less beggar-boy ; and he had been making his way into the town by the river-side, late last night, when he heard angry voices approaching him on the path ; and being only a poor boy, and no one at his side, he ran and hid himself behind some furze-bushes. A young man and a young girl came up—he believed he ought to call her a young lady, from her dress, and from her “fine speech.” She applied hard names to the young man ; he did not remember all the names—and what he subsequently beheld terrified him so much, that it was no wonder he should forget them ; but he did remember one of them ; the young girl called the young man her “deströyer.”

The witness then saw the young man and the young woman scuffle together ; and then the former took up a stone, and struck the latter on the forehead, and he struck her again and again, until she fell down. And the young man went away, when the young woman had lain motionless for some time ; and the boy crept out to look at her, and she was dead. He heard the man returning, and hid himself again. The man stood for a while over the corpse, then stooped down, raised it across his arms, and went away with it.

Witness concluded by saying, that he was so much frightened he was afraid to stir from his hiding-place, until the day began to break ; that then he ran, as well as he could, to the next farm-house, but was too weak to continue his way to the town, until he had got something to eat ; but that, as soon as he could, he did come in, and immediately told his story at the mayor’s office.

He was asked if he could point out the person he had seen committing this dreadful deed ; he answered that he thought he could, for the moon was high, and he had seen him plainly. The crier’s rod was placed in his hand. He turned slowly round ; and as he touched with it the head of the prisoner, a fearful murmur ran through the crowded court-house.

This was all like a loathsome dream to poor Edmund Fennell, though he knew it to be reality.

The judge on the bench was a man who, it was said, scarcely ever permitted one grain of mercy to be dropped into the scales of justice while he held the balance. He would bully the criminal who pleaded for compassion ; but

above all, while a wretched fellow-creature trembled before him on the crumbling verge of eternity, he would be facetious, flashing some miserable pun into the face of the doomed man ; and then glancing round to note an approval of his faint witticism among his auditors. Sometimes he was called "Judge Bladderchops," or the "Puffing Judge ;" sometimes he was called the "Punning Judge ;" but oftener the "Hanging Judge."

"Curran," said he, at a large dinner party, "is that *lung* beef before you?" "No," answered Curran, in his shrill, fife-like voice, "but let you only *try* it, and it soon will be."

In fact he was the judge who had presided over the trial of Robert Emmett, and whose conduct and words on the occasion have, with the assistance of the poor young enthusiast's comments upon them, immortalised his lordship in a very peculiar way.

This man charged the jury upon Edmund Fennell's trial. In that charge, there was not a word of merciful interpretation of circumstances in favor of the undefended and undefending youth before him. On the contrary, it much resembled a violent speech to evidence, by an attorney-general, upon an ex-officio prosecution. The jury retired to their room, with brows of which any one might interpret the meaning ; stopped in just long enough to give the appearance of not being in an unseemly haste in deciding upon their verdict ; returned to their box, one by one ; took their seats slowly, and it seemed sorrowfully, after all their prejudice against the prisoner ; answered to their names, when called over to turn, by the proper officer in low and solemn voices ; and not even a breathing could be heard among the gazing and listening multitude, as the usual routine of words passed between them and the same individual :—

"Gentlemen of the jury, have you agreed to your verdict?"

"We have."

"Who answers for you?"

"Our foreman."

"How say you, gentlemen of the jury—in the first count of the indictment, is the prisoner at the bar guilty or not guilty?"

"Guilty."

And the answer of the foreman of the jury was given in a whisper so thin and wiry—

“There was nought
Between it and silence.”

And yet it was heard in the farthest corner of that crammed and suffocating hall.

“Look to him, jailor,” immediately said the registrar of the court; and although these also were but words of course, and often carelessly uttered, they now seemed to be deeply felt by the person who spoke them, and broke upon the stilly pause around with the solemnity of a knell.

Clasping his hands tightly, the miserable youth at the bar raised his blood-shot eyes upwards, and his white lips moved without sound; then he seemed endeavoring to arrange his disorganized ideas. Several times he pressed the lower parts of the palms of his hands against his temples, as if he believed that his brain was about to burst through them, and that he must thus try to keep it in its place.

The officer of the court, who had just consigned him to the watchfulness of his jailor, now glanced back at the judge, and receiving his significant nod, again spoke:—

“Prisoner at the bar, have you anything to say why sentence of death and execution should not be passed upon you?”

“I have,” answered the prisoner, speaking impressively, though in a low voice—“I have; is this the time for me to say it?”

“It is.”

“My lord, I will not take up much of your time, I am not able to do so, if I wished to do so. My lord, to my amazement, and my utter consternation and dismay, I find myself, all within a few hours, arrested, committed, tried, and found guilty of a crime, which, upon any human creature, I would not perpetrate, were it to purchase a place in Heaven for me. But of this—of *this* murder—oh, how innocent am I! My lord, the Judge of us all, and high above us all, before whose throne I must speedily appear, witnesses, to his own mercy and compassion, how innocent!”

“Prisoner,” interrupted the judge, gurgling his words through a mass of fat, and inflating his cheeks with his

wheezing breath. "Prisoner, you have had a fair and impartial trial, and you have been found guilty, by a jury of your fellow-citizens—an upright and conscientious jury; and this unsupported assertion of your innocence, against their decision, and against the clearest testimony, is only a useless occupation of the time of the court." (Puff, puff, puff.)

"My lord," resumed the prisoner, "I am sorry if what I have spoken was wrong. As well as I can recollect, I intended to say nothing calculated to offend the court, or the jury. I am bound to take it for granted that both have fairly discharged their duty."

He bowed his head for a moment on his hands, then extending his arms, and turning his eyes upwards, suddenly cried out—

"The Almighty Maker never sent from his hands, upon this earth, a more perfect specimen of his work than you were, my own Helen! And human body never held within it a tenderer, a more devoted heart than yours did! Deep and eternal damnation be the doom of him who shed your precious blood!"

There was a suppressed burst of grief amongst those who surrounded the evidence table; but over all these symptoms of sudden emotion, old Gaby M'Neary's convulsive sobs were audible.

The prisoner continued, with an impetuosity that nothing could interrupt—

"And I am tolled that you have been murdered, and I have been convicted as your murderer! I—I, to whom you gave your young love! I, to whom you gave your hand in marriage! Yes, Helen, yes! my wife, you were—" tears now burst from his hitherto dry eyes. "My wife! the wife of my bosom! my good, my young! my beautiful bride! and my maiden bride too! Oh, God! oh, God! How little do they know, who call me your murderer, the bereavement of my wretched heart, at the thought of your loss!"

"Prisoner at the bar," again interrupted the judge, "you have uttered language, which out of respect to the afflicted father of the murdered young lady, cannot be permitted by the court. You have called her your wife."

"Called her my wife?" interrupted Edmund in his turn,

as he stepped, almost jumped back, "and does any one say she was not my wife?" he continued fiercely, "who dares to say it? Does any one of you all who crowd round about me here, to gratify your want of charity, by witnessing the despair, and the agony of my young heart—does any one of you all dare to say it?" From side to side of the crowd, and up and down from them to the galleries, and from the galleries to them again, his wild glances flew.

"No!" answered a loud but yet broken voice, and Gaby M'Neary started up, turned round, and fully confronted the prisoner, while he frowned deeply, although his tears came. "No! I am her father, and I believe she was your wife—she told me so herself," he added, his voice giving way, as he suddenly dropped into his seat again.

"God bless you, and thank you, sir!" cried Edmund. "God bless you!"

The judge gave a greater puff than he had that day uttered.

"Why have we not had evidence of this?" he demanded.

Edmund had again sunk his forehead upon his open hands; he now slightly started, uncovered his face, looked thoughtful for an instant, and his late impetuosity calmed down, replied to the bench in a quiet tone, while he bowed respectfully.

"My lord, I could not—I would not have tendered evidence upon that point, if I had twenty lives to save; for as your lordship knows, I could have proved it only by disclosing the name of the clergyman who married me to my beloved Helen; and you are also aware, my lord, that such a disclosure would subject him, by the law of the land, to a felon's punishment."

All eyes were now fixed, with a very changed expression, upon the prisoner. The judge emitted a puff, which might be called the puff bewildered. Gaby M'Neary stood up a third time, contemplated his former friend with peculiar interest, and then, muttering something ejaculatory, which on this grave occasion we shall not further describe, pounded his stick against the floor, and again sat down.

"Is it the intention of the prisoner to occupy any further the time of the court?" demanded the judge.

"Only for a few moments longer, my lord. Your lordship is about to pronounce the dread sentence of the law

upon me. I know it is a dreadful one, and yet I do not dread it. I accept it as boon, as a charity, and as such, thank you for it. And I know it is a horrible thing to die a murderer's death upon the gibbet; a very, very horrible thing; but to me it will be a pleasing thing; to me, the hopeless, and broken-hearted lad before you, it will prove a blessing not a punishment. Were I to live on, it must be in utter misery, and in utter darkness of the heart; for with her who is gone from me, the light of life has gone also. My lord, I await you sentence."

Recapitulating the evidence, the judge drew from it most unquestionable proofs of the prisoner's guilt, and warned him that, in the desperate position in which he stood, it would much better become him to declare at once his abominable crime, than to persevere in groundless assertions of his innocence. That the murdered lady was the prisoner's wife, it was impossible to believe; but if such were really the fact, why had not proof been given of it? and his lordship had asked the question before. Surely the proof were easily attainable. As to the reason assigned, why it had not been—namely, that the prisoner would not place in jeopardy the—his lordship supposed—popish priest, who, it was pretended, had performed the ceremony—that could not be a motive likely to influence an individual who had no hesitation in staining his soul with innocent blood. Much more was said, not, we hope, with the intention of making the sufferer writhe; and at last came the sentence of the law—the judge hastily, and as if eagerly, proceeding to put on that silly thing, the melo-dramatic black-cap, before he pronounced it. At the expiration of forty-eight hours, the prisoner was to be conveyed to the common place of execution, and there hanged by the neck until he was dead—

"Hanged by the neck until you are dead," repeated a voice, in cautious whispers, somewhere near to Edmund.

After which the prisoner's body was to be given for dissection—

"And your body to be given for dissection," continued his invisible tormentor—

"And the Lord have mercy on your soul," ended his lordship—

"An' somebody else be ready to recave your sowl!" paraphrased the hissing whisperer.

But simultaneously a thousand voices piously and fervently cried "amen," to the judge's more merciful prayer.

CHAPTER XLI.

WITH a kind of nightmare sensation, the sentenced Ned Fennell, having been re-conducted to his cell, beneath the court-house, seated himself on the miserable bedstead which was in a nook of the miserable place. The jailor and a turnkey passed out of his dungeon, and locked the door, but he took no notice. They had asked him some questions, he had returned them no answers. It was now deep darkness all around him; he sat still and stirred not. Rats came and walked about his feet; he was vaguely conscious of their being so near him, but he made no attempt to chase them away. And how long he remained in this motionless, feelingless, callous condition, he did not know, and he did not care to know. The door of his cell reopened, and a turnkey, wearing a black mask, entered, a rushlight in his hand, and was followed by the Catholic clergyman, whose duty it was to prepare sentenced criminals for death; and still the circumstance scarcely aroused him from his lethargy.

The priest and he were left together. He gazed at his visitor, but only with a dull expression. The clergyman addressed him commiseratingly; and Edmund seemed gradually to catch meaning from his words—seemed to comprehend the horrible past, and the terrible future. He sank on his knees and prayed. His companion followed his example, and prayed with him. A solemn view of the necessity of preparing for his death, now almost exclusively filled his soul; the judgment throne—the greatness, and the power, and the majesty of Him who sat upon it, came before him in a vision, as it were, and yet almost a palpable one.

The priest and he still knelt and still prayed together. Then Edmund Fennell prayed by himself; and then, hav

ing signified his readiness to begin the confession of his sins, the clergyman sat on the bedstead, while he knelt beside him. The confession was over; the penitent now sat close by his spiritual friend, and for some time, they so remained, hand in hand together.

Presently the priest addressed to him soothing and consoling words, inspiring the great hope of a place of rest in another world, and Edmund, with a placid countenance, listened attentively; he could now thank God and his reverend comforter, for a great relief of heart.

For some time there had been hasty steps passing and repassing outside the cell. The conversation between the priest and Edmund began to assume a mixed character, partly worldly, and partly religious. The former learned from the latter, that he had not tasted food for thirty hours; he started up, and knocked at the door of the dungeon; it was opened, and Father Connell appeared standing without.

The instant Edmund beheld the old man, he bent his knee to the floor of his prison, and looked with a seeking earnestness into his protector's face. Neither of them wept at this meeting; the cause of it "lay too deep for tears." Father Connell advanced very slowly to Edmund. Arriving close to the spot on which he knelt, the aged priest raised his hat, and stretched forward his right arm over the head of the suppliant, and looking upwards, prayed with great solemnity.

"May He, whose mercy is as unbounded as his power and his justice, have mercy and compassion on you!"

Edmund Fennell kissed the hand that had been raised to Heaven for him. Father Connell gazed at him, filled with the woe that speaks not—Edmund broke the silence:—

"Fear not much for me, sir," he said, in a calm though sorrowful voice; "I am not guilty of the horrid act for which they have sentenced me to a dreadful death."

The old man stepped back, catching his breath.

"Edmund Fennell," he said, "you are kneeling—is this true?"

"It is, my father," answered Edmund.

He arose and spoke apart with his confessor. Father

Connell understood him, and watched them both with devouring eagerness.

"Now, sir," resumed Edmund, addressing the young priest, and motioning towards the elder.

"Sir," said the former, approaching Father Connell, "I have permission from my penitent to declare to you, that under the seal of confession, he has asserted his innocence of hand, act, or part in this murder, and of all knowledge of it, previous to his being accused of it."

"Then let me hold you in my arms, my son," said Father Connell, "and praise the Lord with you."

After embracing Edmund, they entered more into particulars. The other clergyman was of their council. Edmund, for the first time since he was thrown down and beaten by his captors, could now exercise the powers of his mind—his recollections, his judgment, his reasoning and comparing faculties; and he supplied to his two clerical friends statements which, but a few hours before, might have done him some good service. He mentioned the fitting appearance of Robin Costigan among the people on the high ground near the river; together with the words which the old beggar had whispered into his ear. He also informed them that the same whispering voice had, more than once, been near him during his trial in the court-house—though of that fact he could not be quite sure, so confused was his brain on the occasion. He next gave an account of the boy who followed Robin Costigan, and whom he had himself seen, many years ago, in the shower of houses; and though he had not since encountered the imp, until this very day, still he was convinced that it was the same boy, grown into somewhat matured years; and here Edmund recollected poor Mary Cooney's description, not long ago, of the uninteresting youth: and he was convinced that it was the very same individual who had borne false testimony against him on his trial. And lastly, Edmund, after noticing Costigan's threats of vengeance against him in the shower of houses, and in poor Nick M'Grath's bedroom, concluded by asserting his firm conviction that the old ruffian was not only the murderer of his wife, but also the contriver of his (Edmund's) arrest and condemnation for the atrocious act.

Father Connell, well recollecting the character of Robin

Costigan, gave credence to Ned Fennell's assertions and statements. And that the sentenced lad had, on the faith of the confession by which he prepared his soul for death and judgment, persisted in declaring his innocence, now also recurred, with great force, to Father Connell's mind.

The old gentleman seemed to ponder deeply, and most anxiously, for some moments. He suddenly arose from his seat, and moved rapidly to and fro within the narrow confines of the cell, his eyes winking quickly, and seeing nothing, to the often named accompaniment of the working of his fingers. He passed and repassed the clergyman and Ned Fennell, without seeming to notice the presence of either. As suddenly as he had started, almost jumped up, from the bedstead, he now stopped short before the door of the dungeon, and with his clenched knuckles gave one loud, authoritative knock against it. By the turnkey, who was stationed without, it was quickly opened. Not facing round to greet the convict, it was nearly in a race that he gained the outer prison-door, and emerged into the street. He walked along at his utmost speed, breathing shortly and in puffs, as much from eagerness as from haste. Soon turning his face to a door some little distance from the prison, he seized its knocker, and with it gave three blows that made the neighborhood ring and echo again. The instant his summons was answered he pushed forward, without putting a single question to the wondering servant, mounted a flight of stairs before him, getting up two steps at a time, with almost the springyness of youth; flung open a door on the landing-place, and, without pause or apology, broke into a drawing-room, in which was seated a florid and very handsome little gentleman, surrounded by his family, to whom he was reading aloud. But, without any wish for stage effect, or of surprise, to the reader, it seems the more convenient plan now, to go back to Edmund Fennell's prison, before relating the old priest's further proceedings.

Scarcely had Father Connell left Edmund and his confessor alone, than another visiter entered the cell. It was Nelly Carty. Her step, manner and face, showed earnestness and anxiety. When she had passed the sentinel turnkey at the door, she suddenly turned round, and, with a

scrutinizing frown, looked at him from head to foot ; but not seeming to gain anything by her investigation, she continued her hasty way close to the bedstead, upon which Edmund Fennell and his priest were sitting.

Having saluted them both, she again looked behind her, as if to note whether the door had been shut and secured. It had ; and she addressed Edmund Fennell, in a very low whisper—

"You'll be wontherin' what brings me here, Masther Ned. It's great business, an' many kinds of business, that brings me here. I want to make inquiries of you," here she sunk her whisper even still lower—"I want to make demand of you, if a man wid a bit of ould black felt over his face, an' holes in id fur his two eyes an' his mouth, is one of the jailors that comes in an' out to you, in this place?"

Edmund, surprised at her appearance, and her whole demeanor, and particularly at this question, answered that he could not distinctly tell whether such was the fact. The clergyman, however, clearly recollected that it was by a person so disguised he had been ushered into the prisoner.

"But," he resumed, "I did not suppose him to be a regular turnkey ; from my former knowledge of the customs of the prison, I believed him to be a very different official."

"And your Riverince was in the right," said Nelly Carty ominously nodding to him.

"My executioner," said Edmund Fennell, changing color.

"He thinks as much," continued Nelly Carty, "bud he may be mistaken."

"Woman, what do you mean?" said poor Edmund, trembling with the hope which these words seemed indirectly to convey.

"Do not dare," said the priest, sternly, "to utter a syllable that may unfoundedly draw the mind of my penitent, from the blessed prospect of a speedy participation in the joys of Heaven."

"I won't, your Riverince ; an' yet, I'll answer your question, Masther Ned. Hearken to me. Though I owe you no good will, for turning from Mary Cooney to another, I have heart enough left in my body, to relieve your mind

from the terrible thought that is in it at present ; from the fear of death on the gallows. Listen to me well, I say. First of all, I can prove to the faces of the foolish judge and jury, who brought you in guilty of your own wife's murder this bless'd day—I can prove that it was not your wife's blood at all, nor a lock of your wife's hair at all, that was found close by the river-side ; and is that news for you, Masther Ned Fennell ?”

Edmund could only clasp his hands, and gape, and gasp for breath. The priest spoke for him.

“ News, indeed, if true ; but how can you prove it ?”

“ By a plain story, your Riverince, that I will give my oath to, an' that another body, well known to Masther Ned, one Masther Tom Naddy, will give his oath to—and that another body too, will give *her* oath to—an' now I mane Mary—yes, my own poor Mary !—it was you they left for dead by the river-side—it was you Masther Ned Fennell murdered, if he murdered any one, though you'll soon be well enough alive, plase God, to tell them what yourself knows about the matther ! An' isn't that another sort of good news for you, Masther Ned ?”

But Edmund did not answer ; he had drooped his head upon the priest's shoulder. The fear of death had not unmanned him ; the sudden reflux of hope now did.

Nelly Carty, at the clergyman's instance, called at the door for wine and water, and other refreshments, and Edmund partook of them and quickly recovered. Nelly Carty was then urged to be more explicit, and she resumed.

She told of her meeting with Costigan, on the high-road, the previous night ; of her hunting him off the road, down towards the river-side ; of her then racing into the town, to find Mary Cooney, and keep her out of his way ; of her failure in this intention, by Mary's absence from Father Connell's house ; of a resumed and lengthened search after the poor girl ; of wandering here and there almost the whole night ; of her taking the path by the river-side about an hour before daybreak ; and of there discovering the body of Mary, murdered, she believed, at the first glance, by Robin Costigan.

“ Yes !” the half-wild woman went on, “ the bright blessed moon shone down upon her, and showed her to me stiff an'

cowld, an' covered wid her own blood—and her own blood was all round about her. Well, I knelt down in that blood—in my own child's blood—ay, ye may start an' look at me, but my own *colleen* she is, an' I'll prove that fornent ye, along wid all the rest—so, in her blood I knelt down—look, 'tis on my clothes yet; an' look here too." She held wide asunder the heavy grey locks on her forehead, and showed upon it a cross, rudely marked—"here is some of id agen—I made that with it here, an' then I swore an oath, that day or night I would not sleep nor stand still, nor ate nor dhrink until I could find out the murtherer ov my darlin', and dhrag him to the gallows' foot! An' though it turned out that he did not murther her, as he bid fair to do—I'll do it yet!" she muttered. "I'll keep that oath yet.

"A man come towards me in the moonshine, runnin' hard, an' whin I saw him first I thought it might be Robin Costigan, comin' back to hide his work, an' I jumped up on my feet, an' sarched fur the knife. Bud it was only Tom Naddy, racing from Gaby M'Neary's house, to look afther his young misthress, as he tould me, on a promise he gave her whin her father turned her out that night; bud he was hours too late, he said, by rason that his ould masther kep him employed, a'most the livelong night, goin' up an' down stairs, to his bed-room, an' back agen.

"Tom Naddy stood by me side, whisperin'; he was terribly frightened at the sight under his eyes, an' he thrembled and shook; an' the grief sthruck him too, an' as I cried down the bitther tears, he cried along wid me; he tould me he loved Mary—och, who didn't! I asked him to help me an' carry her corpse away, an' hide it frum Robin Costigan, until we could bury id in Christian ground. He said he would, if I'd let him look round about us fur his own poor young misthress, who, he had fears, was murthered, too. I b'lieved the same thing, bud it throubled me little—how could it! He came back to me, afther goin' up every risin' ground, an' lookin' over every path, bud findin' no trace of the person he wanted to see; bud, in a little hollow on the hill side, over the river, there was a cloak of hers, an' a bonnet, an' bundle. So he said no more about her fur that time, bud he stooped down to help me to lift the corpse, an' I went to the feet, an' he went to the

head, an' as he stooped over her, Tom Naddy gave a little start, an' tuk off his hat, an' put his ear close to the spot over her heart, an' tuk id away agen, an' held id close agen.

" 'Tom Naddy,' I said, 'what is your mainin'? Mother o' Heaven! what is your mainin'?"

" 'This girl isn't dead,' he said, jumping up, 'come here an' feel her heart.'

" I screeched out, until the river banks, up an' down fur miles, hard me! I ran to my darlin's head. I knelt agen, and bent down—oh, by the blessed light! a little, sorrowful sigh, like, stole out frum between her lips, as my cheek touched them. Tom Naddy flew to the river, and cum back wid water in his hat, an' we threw id upon her face, and we put some dhrops of id into her mouth, an' the life gave more an' more signs, all over her. Yis! the life, the life! my darlin' wasn't murdered! My darlin' was not dead! Wasn't gone for ever frum me!

" I don't know what I said or did—bud I lost my senses, I b'lieve, fur a while. Bud Tom Naddy made me come back to myself, an' bring to mind that now, in earnest, we ought to take her an' hide her frum Robin Costigan; and so we did.

" Nigh at hand, undher the river's bank, there was a little boat, that Gaby M'Neary and his daughter used to take their pleasure in, whin the summer evenins 'ud be fine; and Tom Naddy had the key of the chain that made the little boat fast by the bank, an' he knew where the oars were hid; an' we soon laid my darlin' in the bottom ov the little boat, an' put the river between her an' Robin Costigan. An' at the other side ov the river, where the weir crosses it, there is a mill—a very high, tall mill, six lofts high, a flour-mill; an' the miller's wife an' myself were related, an' we used to be friends in the pleasant days of my girlhood, long ago, afore I fell into sin, an' lost every friend I had, along wid everything else, barrin' the sorrow an' the shame that the sin brought; bud she spakes to me yet, now and then, an' gives me a handful of pyaties, like the other good neighbors; an' so we knocked at the mill-dour, and Anty Murphy got up—that's my gossip's name—whin I tould her my story, every word, and that I wanted to hide my child frum Robin Costigan; an' she asked her husband, an' he let us; an' then, Tom Naddy and I, and Anty Mur-

phy's good man, we all took Mary out ov the boat, an' we carried her up all the step-ladders, over all the shaky lofts, one afther another, until we had her in the top loft ov all ; an' there we made her a little bed, an' Anty helped me to wash an' to dhress the wounds on her poor head ; an' I sat down, to be my darlin's nurse ; an' they all swore to me that no livin' crature bud myself should know that Mary was there, or was alive, or what had become of her, until I could quit her side, an' go my own way, to see her rightified, and to keep her frum harum, for the futhure. An' the miller promised that he would watch the mill-dour well, an' keep off every sthranger ; an' that he would put a great, big wicked dog, at the feet ov the first step-lader, so that the black devil himself, in Robin Costigan's shape, couldn't go up a step ov it, widout gettin' lave.

"My darlin' was now sleepin' soft, an' Tom Naddy an' I had a word about his poor young misthress ; an' afther tellin' him to the best of my knowledge where to go look fur her, he gave one look at Mary, an' went his ways, to go in quest of her.

"The moon now began to go down in the sky, to make room fur the mornin' that was comin' in her place ; an' I was sittin' by my child's head, my heart full ov blessed hope, an' my eyes fixed on her face. She moaned mournfully, an' stirred, an' dhrew a long, long breath, an' then woke, an' opened her eyes, like the dawn ov the day on me, an' knew me—knew me the first look ! Bud I wouldn't let her spake a word, nor stir a fut nor a hand. No, I woudn't even spake a word to her myself ; only I knelt down, an' I kissed her lips an' her cheeks, an' her poor sore head, over an' over ; an' gave her something good fur her to dhrink, that my cousin left to my hand ; an' thin Mary soon shut her beautiful eyes agen, an' fell into another doze.

"Fur hours that she slept I still watched her, bud at last stole to a little window in the gable of the mill, to open it, an' give her some air ; for the sun began to shine sthrong upon the slates above our heads, an' it was very hot on the little ould loft. So I opened the window, an' looked across the river, towards the spot where we found my darlin'. Near that spot, undher the high bank, there was a man standin' in the shallow wather, like as if he was hidin'. I thought he looked up at the mill, an' thin hard at me. I

dhrew back, bud only so as that I could still look at him. An' long an' well I looked ; bud that man was not Robin Costigan. Bud I soon knew who he was. He turned the side ov his face to me, ov a sudden, an' thin I knew him. He used to be a great crony of Robin's, an' was one of his own picked men. I wonthered very much to see him there. I still looked over to him, an' came back close to the open window. He cast his eyes up agen an' knew me in his turn, an' beckoned hard an' fast to me. I went quite away from the window, an' my heart sunk down widin me, an' I was terribly afear'd. It came into my mind that Robin Costigan had found out, by manes that no one else bud himself could, that my poor Mary was alive still, an' had sent this nan to watch her fur him—an' oh, I then eyed her asleep afore me, an' I wrung my hands, an' I cried, widout sayin' a word, or makin' a sound, till I thought the heart 'ud burst into bits in my body.

"A little time after, my cousin Anty came up the step-ladder, to tell me that a man wanted to see me, outside the mill-dour, an' wouldn't go away widout seein' me, bud for no harum, she thought, only fur somethin' very sarious ; fur he said there was life an' death in id—ay, twenty lives an' deaths in id. I gave her a pictur, as well as I could, of the ould robber—it wasn't him. I went to the window agin—the man I saw afore, across the river, wasn't there now—more betoken, Anty tould me that the man at the mill-dour cum across the weir, to ask fur me ; an' after a moment's more thought on the head ov it, I left Anty to watch my darlin', an' went down to meet Dennis Keegan, the wickedest comrade that Robin Costigan ever had ; bud I didn't find him so wicked now. A change was upon him.

"Along wid all the rest that ever knew her or saw her, Molecth had the love on his heart for my poor Mary, ever since she was a weeny child ; an' the spillin' of her blood changed his heart an' his mind intirely agen Robin Costigan—ay, an' agen Robin Costigan's bad ways, an' his own bad ways ; an' he made a vow to quit him an' them. An' larnin' frum Robin that he meant to send him, an' the others that came to help him in murdering poor Mary, far away, an' stay alone himself near the spot where she was left for dead, the thought came upon Molecth that Costi-

gan wanted to watch her, an' be sure that not a spark of the life stayed in her, or if it did, to rise his hand to her agen ; and fur this raison, he turned back from the others, to watch the ould robber, in his turn. Another thing made him curious. He saw Costigan takin' the ould hat from the Babby's head afore they parted, an' then he stole on him, where he was sittin' a one side, cuttin' the ould hat into the shape of a *skibbeah's* mask, an' at this he obsarved him closer an' closer.

"An' whin Dinnis Keegan come back to the river-side, he saw him standin' near the place where they had left poor Mary—bud she wasn't to be seen then. An' afterwards, he saw him hidin' until people come up in the grey ov the dawn, an' gathered round the bloody spot ; and then he saw all about you, Masther Edmund, an' the part Costigan took in id. The people dhragged you to the town, and Costigan was wid them still ; and still Dennis followed them an' him. Whin they all come into the town, great was his wonder to see his ould Masther quit the crowd, an' put on his *skibbeah's* mask, in a lane, fornent the jail-dour ; an' thin cross over to the dour, an' knock at it, an' go in. Bud he soon larned the manin' ov that turn of ould Robin's. It was well known that there was no hangman in town, to do the work that he b'lieved would soon be ready on Gallows Green ; the sheriffs were in a great pucker, fur fear they'd be forced to do id themselves ; an' so, out of the ould love he bears you, Masther Edmund, an' moreover, to hide himself for a little while, in the last place in the world, where people 'ud come to look fur him, an' fur that raison, in the best place, Robin Costigan is under one roof wid you to-night."

Many had been the interruptions on the part of Edmund and the clergyman, to this narration of Nelly Carty ; and now Edmund broke out, shuddering, in exclamations of horror, not yet unmixed with fear even. He also expressed great surprise at the last circumstance mentioned by the potato-beggar.

"It is indeed very strange," said the clergyman, "but not so very unusual. To my own recollection, it has happened more than once before, that a man in a black mask has offered himself at the jail-door, as executioner for an approaching event ; and after stipulating that his name

should not be asked, and that to guard against public exposure, he should wear his mask till the matter was ended, his proffered services have been accepted; and after the affair, and after receiving a heavy fee, he has gone abroad into the world again, no one knowing anything more about him."

The cell-door was here again opened, and Father Connell re-entered in great and agitated haste, followed by our smiling, handsome little gentleman. A small table being provided, the latter sat down to it, deliberately put on his spectacles, and drew from his pocket, pens, an ink-bottle, and very professional paper, smiling all the while most kindly and complacently. In fact, he was an attorney, a great friend of Father Connell, and he had come under the old priest's guidance to make notes from Edmund Fennell's own declarations, for a memorial, to be presented to the Lord Lieutenant, praying a respite of Edmund's sentence, beyond the forty-eight hours specified by the "hanging judge," to enable the lad to establish his innocence.

The powerful additions made to Edmund's case, since Father Connell had left the prison, were now heard with great joy by the old clergyman, and with great satisfaction by the attorney. Father Connell even went so far as to presume that they were sufficient to procure Edmund's immediate liberation, without having recourse to the memorial at all.

But the smiling solicitor shook his head. They supplied only additional reasons, he said, why the memorial should be proceeded with; they made it stronger, and greatly increased the chance of its success. Yet, strong as they were, they did not afford such legal and palpable proof of Edmund's innocence, as to authorize the local authorities not to proceed in the execution of the law's sentence. Besides, he whispered to the two clergymen, that the time was now perilously short; and accidents might happen on the road; or the Lord Lieutenant might not at once be seen. And in fact, he concluded, the attempt to murder Mary Cooney did not disprove the evidence on the trial that Edmund had murdered Helen M'Neary; that lady must be forthcoming, in order to have the fact demonstrated, and therefore the memorial ought to be prepared, and forwarded with all despatch.

"The young lady is alive, an' I hope well," here observed Nelly Carty in a whisper to Father Connell, "one towld me as much, sence I sent Tom Naddy to look fur her ; but God knows whin Tom can have her to the fore ; an' fur that raison, your riverince, let the attorney begin his writin'."

Fully convinced, and now more anxious than ever, Father Connell urged his friend to complete his task. Poor Edmund observed the demur among them all, and again changed color. The attorney did not take a long time to finish his notes. Father Connell and he were then hastily leaving the cell—the former almost dragging out his methodical friend. So earnest was his hurry, that he crossed the threshold without taking leave of Edmund Fennell.

"Will you not give me your blessing, sir, before you go?" said Edmund.

Father Connell paused, and turned round. Edmund was upon his knees. He hastened to him, and assumed the same position.

"Kneel down, kneel down," he said, slowly and impressively motioning to the other clergyman, to his professional friend, and also to Nelly Carty, who remained in the most distant corner of the cell, "and kneel down," he continued to the stern-looking man who had opened the dungeon door for his departure, and who now stood upon its threshold. He was obeyed by all. He had not spoken loudly to them, but there was a patriarchal authority in his low-toned command, and so all knelt. Then he laid his hat beside him on the floor, strained his eyes upward, and stretched his arms to their full length above his head. And he prayed in the same suppressed inward voice in which he had issued his command to those around him.

"Lord of justice and of mercy, mercifully hear our humble supplications this night! If it be your holy will to take this boy out of the world, even now, in the vigor of his first youth ; grant to him, we beseech thee, that he may be enabled to prepare for meeting Thee face to face—Thee his august and Heavenly judge!"

He placed the palms of his hands on Edmund's bowed head, as he continued, "the blessing of God be upon you,

and with you, my child, amen ;" and the *amen* echoed by those who knelt around, if not loud, was heartfelt.

Without rising from his place, the ancient priest allowed his hands to fall on the shoulders of him for whom he prayed, and he laid his cheek close to that of the sentenced prisoner. For a little while he remained silently thus, and the lookers-on could perceive that he wrestled almost till he shook, with his strong sorrow. At length he suddenly arose ; three times made with his open hand the sign of the cross over his adopted son, and again caressing him cheek to cheek, whispered in his ear—

"Now God be with you, Neddy, my poor child—God be with you !" and before Edmund could command words to express his feelings, Father Connell had hastened with his professional friend to the remote outside door of the prison, commanding the turnkey, who was in attendance, to follow and open it for him.

In the mean time the head jailor, or governor of the dreary abode, appeared at Edmund's cell door.

"What is this," he asked, "long past prison hours and strangers yet in the prison ? I beg your pardon, sir," he continued, turning to Edmund's confessor, "I could not mean you—you are at liberty to remain as long as he and you like with the poor young gentleman ; but—come here, friend Mask !" he went on, calling through the open door up the passage which crossed it, "come here and put this stranger out of the jail."

The person addressed entered from the darkness without, like a summoned familiar—"Remove her from the cell," continued the governor, pointing to Nelly Carty.

"He'll niver do that," answered the potato-beggar—"but do you lock the cell dour well, Misther Jailor, an' mind what I'm goin' to say !" her directions were instantly obeyed ; she flew at the man in the mask, and stuck in him like a wild cat ; he struggled hard with her ; but she succeeded in tearing off the disguise from his face, as she shrieked out—"look at him now, an' well !—this is the man that spilt the blood by the river-side last night—blood that Master Edmund Fennell never stained his hands in—never had to do with—and that I'll prove ! I'll prove !—and this is the man that thought to rob ould Nick M'Grath's house a little while ago, an' thought to

set it o' fire—saize him an' hould him fast, Misther Jailor! hould him fast, or a near crony of his will whip him off from you, while you're not dhraming about it! he broke this jail afore now, when ye thought ye had him safe for the gallows, for stealing Tom Hefferman's cow—ay, an' after ye thought that ye hanged him well, for stealing the Widdy Murphy's horse! hould him fast, Misther Jailor! —good night, Robin," she added—"I'll meet you at the gallows' fut agen, plase God."

CHAPTER XLII.

FATHER CONNELL and the solicitor walked away from the prison, towards the house of the latter, the old priest holding his head very high, and clawing his friend's arm, upon which he leaned, at a great rate. To many questions from his companion, he remained quite silent—in fact he did not hear them. Being however closely pressed, by repeated queries, as to the messenger he intended to send to Dublin, with the memorial, and having at length heard and understood what was demanded of him, he replied that he would take charge of it thither himself. Into the hands of no other living creature, would he intrust it. There was no other living creature loved Neddy Fennell so well, and no other could so well perform the necessary duties required by the exigencies of the case.

The attorney pondered, and came to the conclusion, that his venerable companion was right. They arrived at the attorney's house, and entered his office. Although our good-humored, and placid friend knew perfectly well that expedition was now of all things necessary, yet were his habits of systematic proceeding not to be overturned. He sat down to make a fair draft of the memorial, with all his usual precision and deliberation. He arranged his facts methodically; selected his words carefully; duly and slowly read over his rough draft, now thus amended, measured a margin on the paper for his second draft, and determined the distance that was to be observed between its lines, as

if the human life at stake depended upon the technical correctness of the document.

All this while our poor Father Connell was in a fever of anxiety. His professional friend had provided him with an arm-chair, and smiling most imperturbably, requested him to occupy it. But the old man could not sit still. He would start up and pace about ; glance eagerly at the slow though sure, progress of the attorney ; drop sitting for while ; again start up ; try to look at some good prints, which were upon the walls of the apartment ; start away from them, and more hastily than before, pace about in every direction ; glance again and again at the writer at the desk, and force himself barely to suppress exclamations of impatience to be gone. But it was beyond the eleventh hour of the night, before he at length placed the important paper in the side-pocket of his jock-coat.

"Now how do you intend to travel, Father Connell?" asked his friend.

This point had not previously occurred to our parish priest, in his thoughtful abstractions, although more important ones had. He paused a moment, and answered -- "On horseback—it was on horseback he always journeyed, and he was a good horseman."

"Very true, sir ; every one knows that ; but I fear your sedate bay mare would find an uninterrupted journey of sixty Irish miles, and necessarily a hasty journey too, beyond her powers of performance."

"And I believe so," muttered Father Connell in a dilemma.

"You must take a post-chaise, sir," continued the attorney ; "there is no stage-coach, nor mail-coach to set out from this town until to-morrow—a post-chaise it must be."

The old priest assented, and they parted. There were now little more than thirty-six hours left, for going to Dublin, for presenting the memorial, and for coming back ; and, the distance, going and coming, was one hundred and twenty long Irish miles. The inn where Father Connell should engage a post-chaise, was on his way to his own house. When he reached it, its doors were closed, and no lights to be seen in its windows. Father Connell knocked loudly ; he was not answered. Again, and again, and

again ; the same result. He hurried into the middle of the street, and gazed eagerly towards the black windows, for a gleam of a light ; no such thing was to be seen ; he regained the door, and listened with bent head, to catch the sound of a footstep within the house ; no such thing was to be heard. Knock, knock, knock ; silence. Often and often did he pray to God to grant him patience, and to strengthen him. Nearly one whole precious hour thus wore away ; and all the while, it rained heavily upon his fevered and heated body. At length, in answer to a tremendous assault of his heels upon the door, a voice was heard speaking within, and calling on others, in no very gentle accents, to stir themselves and get up. Father Connell ceased knocking, and awaited the opening of the door. But the loud voice within ceased too ; and once more there was dead silence, and the door was not opened. All the tired inmates of the inn were, in fact, in their first sound sleep of the night. Our priest had nothing for it but go to his old word over again, which, indeed, he did, to the utmost of his strength and power.

A window was thrown up, a bitter curse flung at him, and a sleeping growling voice demanded—"Why the devil he made such a racket at that hour?"

In a tone of absolute entreaty, nay, humility, Father Connell made his business known. He was answered that no post-chaise could be had at such an unseasonable hour of the night ; and the speaker wondered exceedingly, in his very heart and soul, how any one could even think of such a thing ; the horses had all come home late, tired from the road ; and the post-boys had all gone to their homes and their beds, long ago, and it was a shame, and a "burnin'" shame, to disturb honest people, in the dead of night, in such manner ; and such a night too—cold, and blowing, and pelting rain—it was a scandalous shame.

"I beseech and pray of you, for the love of Heaven," said Father Connell, "do not refuse me—it is a matter of life and death—do not refuse, and may God reward you!"

A petitioner is seldom thought much of. He was told that he ought to be in his bed, instead of being out in the rain, on a dark piercing night, saying his prayers in the middle of the street.

"Get me a post-chaise at once, I command you!" the old

man now cried out, stung perhaps by sarcasm, while he was tormented by the delay.

The speaker's tone immediately changed. Inquiry was made who wanted the vehicle? Father Connell gave his name. Many and profuse apologies followed. The speaker disappeared; in a little time, the landlord and the waiter opened the door, and a promise was given that the best post-chaise in the establishment should be at the priest's door, in a few moments.

The priest made inquiries as to the probable amount of the expenses of a journey to Dublin and back again. He learned, in reply, that, by post-chaise conveyance, they would amount nearly to twelve or thirteen pounds. He was astounded. Ever since he had become a parish-priest, indeed, during his whole long life, so large a sum, belonging to himself, had not once been in his possession. He thrust his hands into his pockets; they contained a few shillings; and he hastened home in dismay, to search the little quaint-looking old desk in his bed-room, full of sad misgivings that his quest would be profitless.

His housekeeper, who, on his return from the country, that evening, was the first to acquaint him of the calamity that had occurred, now met him with eyes swollen and blood-shot from crying all the day and night; and her air of self-importance was quite forgotten, as (the big tears running in a continuous stream down her unfeminine face) she looked into the haggard and care-worn countenance of her old master.

"Yes, my poor Peggy," he said, endeavoring to gulp down the sorrow, which, in spite of his utmost efforts, began, at this sight, to master him:—"yes, my poor Peggy, you loved the boy as I loved him, and your heart is full as well as my own—" he pressed the housekeeper's rough hands in his, while, for the first time that night, the tears ran from his own old eyes, as they encountered hers. But very shortly he recovered and re-manned himself.

By his directions, the housekeeper followed him into his bedroom. Here he acquainted her with the almost established fact of Ned Fennell's innocence; and how the poor woman now again wept, but triumphantly! It had been, too, her own firm belief, all through, notwithstanding the decided opinions to the contrary, pronounced by all the

comforters who had visited her during the day and night, and will she not be allowed a little egotistical exultation on that account also ?

She entered fully into the spirit of the aged clergyman, regarding his present expedition ; and gleams of hope began to break in upon her despairing grief. So, while the priest unlocked and searched his desk, Molly busied herself in packing up a change of attire for him ; but she could barely refrain, even in his and her distress, from giving vent, while doing so, to her customary remarks on his extravagance, as she surveyed the few inner garments, most of them patched, and re-patched, which constituted his present stock. She did refrain, however, as she glanced at his changed face and shivering frame ; and oh, often and often, to the end of her life afterwards, had Mrs. Molloy to bless God that she had done so, and that her whole conduct and speech had been studiously, and indeed unusually respectful to the old gentleman, on this sad eve of their parting.

Father Connell rummaged his sarcophagus. He alighted upon a parcel well wrapped up, and secured with twine. It certainly contained money, and it was weighty too. But there was a label upon it, in his own handwriting, which declared—

“This money belongs to the charity school—£50.”

We have seen Father Connell at something like his present occupation, before now. Upon that occasion he did trespass, to the extent of a few shillings, upon a fund, over which he had willed himself to have no control ; and having found some difficulty in quickly restoring the trifle then abstracted from it, he had made a solemn vow never again to be guilty of a like peculation. So this parcel was put aside. He found another, a similar one, tied up with equal care, but it was labelled too—

“This money belongs to the poor of the parish—£17.”

A third, and it announced—

“This money belongs to Mary Cooney—given to me, for her personal wants and necessities by Neddy Fennell.”

The future probable lot of the poor beggar-girl struck upon his mind, and this parcel also quickly fell from his hand.

He took between his finger and thumb the ring of a very little drawer, on which was written—

"This contains my own money."

He pulled the drawer open ; within it were thirteen shillings in silver, and a few halfpence.

He sighed and looked very sorrowfully at his little drawer ; counted the silver over and over again ; raised up and laid down the money for the school, and the money for the poor, and the money for Mary Cooney ; and then he walked rapidly lengthways and crossways through his little bedchamber.

The post-chaise rattled at the outer door. He returned to his desk ; a second time took up the three parcels, one after the other, a second time put them down, and bent his head almost in despair. His housekeeper had left the apartment without his observation. He now felt her ponderous hand upon his arm. She drew him to a small table to one side, and emptied thereon the stocking, in which she had stored the savings of her whole life, and addressed him—

"God help you, fur a poor fool of a man," she was going to say, but she checked herself, and proceeded in an amended form—"God help you, fur a charitable creature ov a man, an' how could you have money, an' all the world dhragging id from you ? Take that, an' use id, and spend id to save my poor warm-hearted boy—him that I'd give the blood frum my veins to save, not to talk o' money : take id, in the name ov God ; an' may he keep you, an' guard you, an' prosper you, in your journey !"

Father Connell looked at his housekeeper in surprise and admiration. He paused ; she urged him more and more.

"Peggy, Peggy," he answered, "I will take your money, then ; and if you are not paid it back, Peggy, in this world—if anything should happen to me upon the road, going or returning, Peggy—it will be a store for you, multiplied ten times tenfold, in a better world. May my blessing, Peggy, and the blessing of the Lord, be with you and about you."

The stocking had contained more than Father Connell deemed necessary for his expedition. He entered on a slip of paper the exact sum he believed he should want, marking it as borrowed from Mrs. Molloy ; placed this docket in his drawer, appropriated the silver the drawer held, and closed his desk.

As he descended the stairs, towards the post-chaise, Mrs. Molloy again encountered him.

"You're lookin' very sick intirely, sir," she said, "an' you're in a cowl'd thremblin' ;—take this frum me afore you lave me."

"I will indeed, Peggy ; I will indeed ; and I give you my hearty thanks besides, for thinking of it ; you are a good creature, Peggy ; and indeed I wanted this ; it is very thoughtful of you, Peggy."

The housekeeper had handed the old priest a mug of warmed spiced ale, he drank it eagerly ; alas, he said but the truth, when he told her he wanted it. He handed her back the mug. He gazed into her hard features ; bade her farewell, reverently and affectionately ; descended to the little yard ; gave one look around at the old place, and up the little garden, and then stepped into his post-chaise, and after a clattering bang-to of its door, was whirled off on his journey.

An old mitten dropped from his hand, as he ascended the vehicle. When the chaise was out of sight, Mrs. Molloy took it up, kissed it, and closed her hand and fingers hard upon it ; and she kept it afterwards, as a precious treasure, until her dying day.

CHAPTER XLIII.

AFTER the departure of the old priest, the good-natured attorney, Nelly Carty, and the head-jailor, from the condemned cell, Edmund Fennell's spiritual friend still remained with him. It was the object and effort of this gentleman now to wean Edmund's mind from any dependence upon the favorable circumstances which had recently occurred, between him and his sentenced lot, and once more to fix his whole soul upon the prospect of confronting, within a few measured hours, his eternal judge. This he did gradually and imperceptibly, but successfully ; dwelling upon all the hopes held out, he argued from them, even as Edmund's legal adviser had done, that they were

not so certain as the fact that the sentence of the law should take its course, if the very personal appearance of Helen M'Neary did not occur to interrupt it. And by degrees Edmund's mind and spirit followed the arguments of the good clergyman; and in profoundest awe, and not without an occasional dash of wholesome fear, he at length brought himself to contemplate, almost exclusively, the tremendous subject of the change from life to eternity, through the gates of death, and the vastness, and the mightiness, and the mystery of a meeting with his Maker.

At about one o'clock in the morning, the clergyman bade him a temporary farewell, and Edmund was alone with his own thoughts—a prayer-book in his hand, to which his eye often reverted.

His attention became distracted by a sudden and great tumult on the outside of the prison. There was a thundering and battering at the iron-sheeted door, and a clamor of many voices, over all of which, one voice, which Edmund thought he should know, pre-eminently bellowed. Then he heard the voices, evidently in the interior of the jail, and much confused tramping and stamping, and shuffling and dragging, near to him, and at a distance. Presently silence ensued. But the door of his dungeon was shortly afterwards unlocked, and Tom Naddy made his appearance.

Edmund Fennell had extended his hand to greet Tom's entrance, but he held it back upon perceiving what, under the circumstances, he could not avoid considering as an unnatural and brutal levity, on the part of his old acquaintance. Tom's hat was quite out of his general mode of wearing that appendage—considerably to one side of his head, and fixed, indeed, in an absolutely rakish position; an unrestrained broad grin ran over his face, and he was really, and truly, and heartily, and loudly whistling a jig-air at intervals. Besides his usual cautious carriage, he assumed, too, as much of a swagger as his size and proportions permitted.

"Well, Masther Ned," said Tom, "an' how goes oats to-day?"

Edmund gazed at him, not in anger, but in great horror and disgust.

"Very bad accommodations they give here, Masther

Ned, considering that they make people put up their quarters in id, agen the grain."

So utterly had Ned Fennell been absorbed in the contemplation of unearthly matters, that his mere human reason proved dull, for a moment, to the meaning which, in a more disengaged frame of mind, he must have attached to Tom's buffoonery.

"You have absented yourself," he said, "all through my misery, and you are now come to insult me?"

"No, Masther Ned, I am not," answered Tom Naddy, now showing, by his tones and manner, that he *could* feel—"bud I have news to tell you, that 'ill—" and he resumed his waggery—"that 'ill make you put that good book in your pocket, until daybreak, at laste."

Edmund began to apprehend. He gaped, he stared, he clasped his hands:—

"Well?—do not trifle with me one moment!"

"Masther Ned, I won a wager ov two ould golden guineas from you afore now; I have them two guineas yet—an' I'll bet you the same two agen ten more, that I'll make you caper about this cursed hole ov a place—ay—an' afore you're much oulder—like a young filly through a clover-field."

"Tom!" was all Edmund Fennell could say, as he grasped tightly the fellow's arm.

"Ay, faith—cover-the-buckle it must be, by the piper that played afore Moses."

"My wife—Tom—my wife!"

"Brave an' hearty, she thanks you kindly—would you like to see her, Masther Ned?"

Tom knocked at the dungeon door, and the next instant Helen M'Neary was embraced by her young husband. A description of their meeting shall not be attempted, by its present incompetent historians.

"By the great Gog, he's fond of her, shure enough, poor fellow," said Gaby M'Neary, who, unheeded by Edmund Fennell, had been looking on; and who, as he spoke, put his hand to his throat, as if to force down something which he felt stuck in it.

"Edmund! dear Edmund!" whispered Helen, "my father—my father is present."

"Your father, Helen?" He gazed stupidly around him

"Excuse me, sir," he said—"I did not indeed know that you were here."

"By Gog, you puppy, that's plain enough, and divil a much you care if I was in Dingle-dee-cooch, if you spoke the truth."

"Sir, sir, your presence makes me hope that I am the happiest creature the day ever dawned on—it makes me hope, sir, you forgive me."

"What would be the use in laying this stick on your shoulders, until I broke it in pieces, as I ought to do? Confound the baggage, she wouldn't quit you now if I were to go whistle jigs to a milestone for it."

"He forgives us fully, dearest Edmund—and he loves us fully," whispered Helen.

"Sir," continued Edmund, while he and his bride knelt to old Gaby—"you will find me a grateful son; if ever I give you, or my darling Helen, cause to regret your great kindness, I pray that he who now blesses me so exceedingly, may punish me in proportion."

"Your hand here, you damned puppy. After all, I ran away with her mother myself; blug-a-bouns! could I expect that she wouldn't have the ould drop in her, got at both sides of the house? There, shake hands, and let there be an end to it. There's only one thing I'll ask from you, you young rascal."

"Anything, sir—anything that I can promise or perform—only name it."

"Read your recantation—pitch Popery and holy water to ould Nick, and go to church, like a dacent, honest fellow. Blug-a-bounkers! is it laughing at me *you* are, you cross-grained cur?" he exclaimed digressively, as he turned hastily round to Tom Naddy, and gave him such a tap on the head with his bludgeon as caused Tom to cringe, and rub hard the affected part—"By Gog alive, I'll crack your crown in pieces, before you're much older—ha! take that, and the devil be your apothecary; 'twas you brought all this about, you brat; I know the whole of it," he continued, re-addressing his son-in-law—"the grinning monkey had the impudence to tell me every word about it, and didn't seem a bit afraid neither;—'twas he schemed out this marriage between ye—and damn my buttons if ever I'd forgive the pair of ye, only that it was that whelp's

doing, and not your own—ha! ha! ha!” by the boot, but ’twas a good joke for all that, stumping about in great glee—“he laid you a wager of two guineas that Helen would be married in a week—you thought the wager was that she should be married to creeping Dick Stanton; but the devil’s bird there, to win his two guineas, worked his plan to marry her to yourself—never a better, ha! ha! Well, you brat, I’ll give you your due—you’re as cunning as old Bamff, the robber—every bit—ha! ha!—ay, by the great Gog—only ’twas that cur’s doing, I’d never let ye within two acres of one another—one or the other of ye.”

“Now my dear father, you would, you would, even for my sake.”

“Why, mam,” put in Tom Naddy, “he neither et, nor dhrank, nor slept, from the moment you left him, until he got you back again.”

“By Gog, you lie, you curmudgeon! I ate two legs of mutton, and I dhrank a dozen of port; and I snored so loud, that you’d hear me from Cork to Dublin. But, you baggage, we’ll have no more fighting, and no more parting; and when that puppy of yours goes to church, as I said before, and comes home an honest Protestant, we’ll be as happy as the day is long. But don’t think *you’ll* escape me, you mongrel—I’ll thrash you within an inch of your life, every day in the week—and by Gog you should never enter my doors, you brat, only you’re the very fellow that has made us all so happy—holloo! abroad there!” he thundered at the cell-door with his bludgeon; the head-jailor appeared; he intimated that he was about to withdraw from the jail, and take his son-in-law, the prisoner, home with him; the man modestly demurred, stating that such a proceeding must occur formally, and that he could not risk his situation, to allow it to happen in any other manner.

“Gog’s-blug-an-ages! Don’t you know who I am, man? And won’t I be your warrant?”

The jailor did know very well, and no one could respect Mr. M’Neary, and the young lady, and the young gentleman, more than he did: but—

Gaby M’Neary blustered again, and even raised his stick; all was useless; the man was firm, though not offensive; and until a reasonable hour in the morning, Mr. M’Neary could not expect to remove Mr. Fennell from the prison.

"Then we'll all stay where we are, till a reasonable hour in the morning, by the great Gog! an' you must give us a good table and chairs here—d'ye hear me, sir? And you must send somebody—here, Naddy, you brat, you'll do the business—gallop off to my house, and bring up here the cold sirloin that I left almost as good as new to-day; and the two bottles of wine that you'll find on the parlor side-board, and all the other things we want—and get all the help you can in the house to carry them with you—run, you starved brat! Ay, by the great Gog! if we must stay here till a reasonable hour in the morning, we'll make a morning of it!"

The governor of the jail, with all his turnkeys and personal servants who were awake, supplied the chairs and tables ordered. Tom Naddy ran down the street, and almost ran back again, laden as he was, followed by one or two assistants, and the table was soon covered, and the chairs soon occupied; and never, from that time to this, or before, did such a revel, a "rollicking," take place in a condemned cell. But it will be easily conceived that in all the loud or expressive portions of this merry-making, Gaby M'Neary and Tom Naddy were the most distinguished performers. Poor Helen, and poor Edmund sat side by side, hand in hand, almost cheek to cheek, and only speaking to each other in whispers, except when summoned by their chief to respond to some very emphatic question or burst of hilarity.

Tom Naddy was seated to one side of the cell; and of course recounted how he had succeeded in discovering and recapturing Helen; how Nelly Carty's hints sent him to the exact place, the old ruined building, about twenty-five miles distant, and how Gaby M'Neary's best horse enabled him to get there, almost as soon as the cart in which Helen was conveyed thither; how he quietly sought out a magistrate, told him his story, and with him and his constables, assisted by a score of the peasantry, surrounded and invaded the old thieves' den; how, by Nelly Carty's directions, he was enabled, after much trouble, however, to discover the secret stone, which gave entrance to the secret vault; how, in it, they found and secured the "young mistress," the Baby, and two of his elder confederates; how the magistrate lent Helen his carriage to convey her home to

her father and the "young mather;" while he, Tom Naddy, sat triumphantly on its dickey; and how, at the same time, the constables and the country people kept up with the carriage, conveying to the jail now above their heads, well secured on a car, their detested prisoners. And Edmund understood that it was the disposing of these individuals, against their will, in suitable lodgings in the prison, which had caused the most part of the startling noises that broke up his devotions.

The autumn morning crept in, even through the bars of Edmund's condemned cell. Nay, flickerings of pale sunlight, as if looking frightened at having got into jail, followed the dawn. It became "a reasonable hour in the morning," and the governor of the prison ventured to re-appear, and hint as much to Gaby M'Neary. Gaby took home his daughter, remained absent about an hour, and then came back, and took home his son-in-law also—every formality having been gone through—the "hanging judge" himself, who had not yet left town, having been seen.

Prodigious was the breakfast prepared under Gaby's roof. To repose he would not go, nor let any one else go, until tea and coffee, eggs, and indeed all viands within reach, should have laid the effects of his two bottles of wine, which, by the way, he and Tom Naddy had almost exclusively consumed between them. Then his brain was full of another project, or, indeed, projects, to be immediately entered upon. Invitations were to be sent out, on a vast scale, for a dinner and a supper, including a ball, and preparations to be instantly commenced for the tremendous revelry. So, amongst a hundred other things, he set Helen's pen to work on the invitations, and he would go himself and verbally deliver those which she could not be expected to write. And she and Edmund were to be remarried before dinner by a Protestant clergyman, and—"blug-an'-ages! how could he forget so long?"—old priest Connell was to be at the dinner among the rest, ay, and among the first and the best; and he and Edmund would start that moment together to secure his company.

Edmund would go with his father-in-law delightedly, on such an errand. But before they left the house, he fixed Gaby M'Neary's attention to another subject, upon which he and Helen had been speaking much and anxiously. It

was that of poor Mary Cooney. So, her relationship to Gaby was stated; and then, her history, her sufferings, her character, her late domestication in Father Connell's house, Helen's visit to her there, and then, her last night's sad and terrible adventures; her present sojourn in the old mill, under her wretched mother's care—everything was communicated to the astonished, the wondering, the pleased, the delighted, the cursing and swearing, the stumping, and the almost blubbing Gaby M'Neary. He immediately dragged Edmund away with him.

As they walked through the streets of the town in great haste, arm in arm, how the thousand eyes of curiosity peered after them! And how many faces, which but yesterday had scowled upon Edmund as a disowned acquaintance, now turned to him, radiant with friendly smiles! Is it man's heart that spontaneously and genuinely gives to him generous feelings, or are those feelings which are only so called, first admitted to that heart under the keen inspection of his prudence and self-interest?

They went to Father Connell's house, and, for the first time, Edmund learned that the old man had gone to Dublin the night before, to present personally the memorial in his own favor. His mind and heart gave a start—an utterly admiring, an utterly venerating—and he knew not why, an anxious and a fear-fraught start. He bent his head, and from that instant, was more thoughtful and sad than became his situation.

His companion urged him on to the old mill. Here Nelly Carty's story was ascertained to be true enough. Gaby wanted to see the poor beggar-girl immediately; but prudence forbade this, and they returned to the town, and sent back to her medical advice and assistance; and under her physician's permission, she was removed that very day, evening rather, to a commodious apartment, under Gaby's roof, where Helen received her as a sister indeed; where the master of the house, under promise of keeping himself quiet, was allowed to give her a father's welcome; where Edmund Fennell once more took her hand as a brother, and where the poor Nelly Carty still continued as her head-nurse. Happy Mary!

Edmund communicated to Helen the fact of Father Connell's journey to Dublin, and made her, by the intel-

ligence, as sad and as nervous as he was himself. But the materials for the mighty dinner, boiled and broiled, and roasted and stewed on, and they were ready to be set on the table, and the concourse who were to partake of them assembled. All the scholars of Dick Wresham's school, with all their wives, daughters, sisters, and so forth, and a great many more of the aristocracy of the town, with their gentle appurtenances also ; and in their presence, in the drawing-room, Helen and Edmund were remarried by the Protestant rector of the parish ; and then the multitude trooped down to the feast ; and mighty was the din and the clatter of plates and dishes, knives and forks, and of the laughing, talking, hob-nobbing, and over all, Gaby M'Neary's bellowing to Tom Naddy.

"Throw open all the doors, street-door and all," cried Gaby M'Neary, "that we may hear the joy-bells I have set a-going."

In the steeple of the ancient cathedral of the city, there were four or five bells of good sizes and sounds, only that one of them was cracked, which occasionally rung out as joy-bells ; and old Gaby had indeed set them in motion on this happy day.

"There they go!" he continued, rubbing his hands, as, after his instructions about opening the doors had been obeyed, the joy-bells became partially heard from a distance, even amid the din of the dining-room ; "there they go jollily! But my curse on that passing-bell from your Mary's steeple, Mr. Thomson," addressing the rector—"Who the divil is dead now, I'd be glad to know ; some old lady in a faded black silk cloak, I suppose, that they're making all this fuss about—damn it! it comes strong on us again—Naddy, you brat, shut all the doors now."

These orders were also obeyed, and, in consequence, the joy-bells indeed were no longer heard at the board of feasting ; but Mary's steeple being much nearer than the steeple of the old cathedral, the steady tolling of the passing-bell, at measured intervals, could not be shut out.

Edmund and Helen exchanged looks not in sympathy with the bridal feast, and they the bride and the bridegroom. It was a late dinner ; the revellers had not sat to table till nearly eight o'clock. About two hours had now elapsed since then, and Helen stealthily retired to

dress and prepare for accompanying her husband, almost immediately, to her father's little country villa, where they were to spend the remainder of the evening alone. Edmund sat silent and spiritless after she went away. Tom Naddy came to the back of his chair, and informed him that a messenger had been sent from his bishop, summoning him to an interview, on pressing and immediate business. He started and turned pale, facing round to Naddy, and staring studiously into his eyes. The lad averted his glances, but Edmund saw that he had been weeping. He jumped up, and hurried out of the house to his bishop.

The dignitary met him gravely and sadly, though kindly. He had almost that instant received, he said, a letter, by dispatch, from the Catholic archbishop of Dublin, concerning Father Connell, in which the archbishop advised that Mr. Fennell should be consulted on the present occasion, in consequence of some words that had escaped his old parish priest. The bishop went on to say that Father Connell had reached Dublin, about eight o'clock that morning, but in a very feverish, shattered, and exhausted state; that he had immediately called on his old friend, the archbishop,—before now, Catholic bishop of Edmund's diocese—to advise with him about waiting on the Lord Lieutenant; that the archbishop had recommended him, first of all, to take repose and refreshment; but that Father Connell's great and devouring anxiety rejected every such proposal; that almost on the instant, the writer was therefore obliged perforce to accompany him to the viceregal lodge, in the Phoenix park, where he had the entrée; and finally, that Father Connell, while in the act of presenting on his knees, to the Lord Lieutenant, the memorial in Edmund's favor, had fainted, and very shortly afterwards died.

Edmund Fennell broke out of his bishop's house. He ran to an inn or hotel, and ordered a post-chaise to be in instant readiness at his father-in-law's door. He flew home to Helen, found her dressed in her room, waiting for him to accompany her to her father's country cottage; told her the news, and saw her the moment afterwards insensible at his feet. He sent down for Gaby M'Neary, and told him the news also. Gaby filled up with a great and

true sorrow ; and in a few minutes afterwards his guests were dismissed, his house shut up,—

“ And the banquet-hall deserted.”

The post-chaise arrived at the door ; Edmund strained his bride to his breast ; shook his weeping father-in-law by the hands ; ran down stairs, jumped into the post-chaise, and was whirled out of the town at a gallop. And this was his Helen's second nuptial night.

It was the Catholic bishop who had sent to get the passing-bell tolled, in Mary's steeple.

CHAPTER XLIV.

EDMUND had learned from the archbishop's letter something more than has yet been noticed. According to it, Father Connell's last words were to the effect—“ That his dying blessing, as a priest and a father, should be sent to Neddy Fennell ; also information that he should like to be buried with the old parish priests, in their own old churchyard.”

The archbishop added, that, in obedience to these wishes of the dead, he had instantly ordered arrangements to be made for the transmission of the body from Dublin ; that at the moment he was writing, such arrangements were actively going on ; and that he hoped and expected that all would be on its way to its destination, about two or three o'clock that same day. And this was the particular intelligence which sent Edmund so rapidly towards the metropolis.

Before daybreak, next morning, people might be seen walking slowly, in twos and threes at a time, towards the Dublin road—rich and poor, all classes, in alternation. No public intimation had been made known on the occasion ; but the news that the body might be expected to leave Dublin, at an hour already mentioned, got abroad, and this silent movement was the result.

A very great crowd had congregated about two miles

from the town, and still the day had not dawned. The people timed their motions very well, calculating on the decent and slow progress which would be made from Dublin. Presently, the red glaring lamps of the vehicle, steadily approaching, appeared in view. Soon after, the stepping of the horses was heard; and then the nodding of the plumes of the hearse became visible, together with the white scarf and hatband of the driver. Up to this moment there had been a deathlike silence among the crowd, now there was one low outbreak, made up of the suppressed groans of men and the wailing of women.

All heads were uncovered, and many knelt in prayer.

The hearse passed by; two mourning coaches followed it. In the first of these, visible by the light of the lamps which it also bore, and muffled up to the brows in his mourning cloak, and without motion or a glance around him, sat Edmund Fennell. In the other, the people discerned, to their great delight and admiration, the former bishop of their diocese—the former resident in Father Connell's little thatched house, and the former intimate and affectionate friend of the ancient priest. He was himself now a very old man.

There was a third vehicle, containing such of the near relations of Father Connell as had had time so to arrange as to go a little way to meet him, on his last earthly journey.

The sad little cortege moved slowly on. The great throng of people proceeded with it at either side, or closed behind it. Profound silence again reigned amongst them. Arrived at the suburbs of the town, very little way was to be made to Father Connell's late dwelling; and here the people left the hearse, and returned into the town. The morning came through clouds and mists upon the little city; but a moral gloom, deeper than that cast by the weather, also fell upon it. There was no man, woman, or child, among its population who was not acquainted with Father Connell's character, who did not venerate and love him when alive, and who did not now mourn him, dead. This assertion is literal; it makes no exception for social degree, or for sect, or for party. The glorious and the great charity, in the exercise of which he had spent a long, long life, and, at last, braved and met death; the glorious and the great charity, which had been, as it were, the very essence

and the very breath of his being—that charity, now filling with admiration and affection all hearts, made all unite, for a time, at least, in one demonstration of feeling. It was the pouring out of oil upon the spiteful though paltry waves of their sectarian personalities and passions, until it stilled them into a glassy stillness. And thus charity begat charity. Their common love for one man, whom they loved, because he was charitable, made them also charitable in themselves, and to one another.

It was, and is the custom in Father Connell's town, for the shopkeepers partially to close their shop-windows, upon the death of a neighbor. On this day, every shop-window was fully closed. Every passing-bell tolled—the almost unheard, illegal little bells attached to Catholic chapels, and the more sonorous ones in the legal church steeples. The citizens of every grade met in little groups about the streets; and you could pass none of them who were not talking, in low voices, of the man and the event, whom all mourned and deplored, and of arrangements to be made for a public funeral in his honor; and Protestant and Catholic discussed the subject together. And there was, somehow, a strange silence through all places of usual public resort and bustle, which thrilled you; and few were seen to laugh during the day.

At about noon, hundreds after hundreds began to visit Father Connell's little chapel. There, upon an elevated framework, a kind of bier, they found, as they expected, his mortal remains, laid out in the coffin, in the middle of the building. The body was draped in its priest's vestment, over all its usual clothes, and the semblance of a chalice was between its hands: so are Catholic priests arrayed for the grave. A number of candles surrounded the coffin. The features of the corpse wore their usual living smile; and the glittering benevolence of the handsome old blue eyes was only wanting, to make it appear life indeed. Many, many who looked upon it, remembered it well as the blessed harbinger of consolation and relief to them, in former days of suffering and sorrow.

On the floor beneath, surrounding the coffin, were benches, on which sat the mourners of the dead—his nearest relations. But apart from the rest, immediately under the head of the body, stood one mourner, who,

though no one could see his features, on account of the arrangement of his black cloak, all knew well ; and they knew that since the body had arrived from Dublin, he had never quitted it for a moment, tasting no food, no drink—partaking of no kind of refreshment—speaking with none, and addressed by none—for his mighty grief, and, the people believed, his remorse, was respected, nay, almost feared to an extent which made all loth to communicate with him.

There he remained the livelong day, wordless and motionless, except that now and then, and very seldom, he would change his standing position for a sitting one. Night came on, and he was still on his post. Messages reached him from the good old archbishop, who had taken up his temporary residence in the priest's abode, near at hand, entreating—nay, commanding him—to leave the body for a time, and take some repose and nourishment ; but he only answered these communications with a denying and most mournful motion of his head. His father-in-law, Gaby M'Neary, being applied to, came personally, and even with requests from his young wife, to solicit him on the same subject ; but these appeals, also, he scarcely heeded.

It grew far advanced in the night, and people shuddered to see him still continue almost alone to bear the dead company.

Next morning, at the earliest hour that visitors began to come again to the chapel, the same figure was still seen at the coffin head. The noon of the second day arrived ; the archbishop, with the bishop of the diocese, and a number of priest's, assembled to celebrate a solemn mass for the repose of the soul of Father Connell ; and then, for the first time, Edmund Fennell moved from his position, walking straight down the chapel he entered the railed way of the little sanctuary, knelt down on the lowest step of the altar, and still in utter silence served the mass—such is the technical expression—the same as he had often, often done, even in childish days when Father Connell used to be the officiating priest, and when his old and beloved features used to beam the affection which his heart felt, upon the glossy-haired urchin who attended him.

The mass was over ; the dignitaries and their clergymen

assembled in the choir, round the coffin, and began to chaunt the sublime and touching service, called in the Catholic church, the office of the dead. Edmund Fennell had preceded them to the head of the bier. The service continued for about three hours longer; and then preparations began to be made for the funeral. During the mass, one little occurrence should not be forgotten in this notice. The chapel was crowded to inconvenience. At a certain pause in the ceremony, a priest turned round on the altar, and strove to pronounce aloud, while his voice failed him, the following words:—

“Pray for the repose of the soul of the Reverend Phelim Connell, your late parish priest,”—all the people had been standing,—the moment the words were heard, man, woman, and child, suddenly knelt, and there was a burst of weeping petition to Heaven, smothered in sobs and groans, over which woman’s stifled shrieks partially arose, and the bitter crying of the little boys of Father Connell’s school was distinctly heard.

The people would not permit the body to be conveyed to the grave, as was first proposed by the directors of the funeral, in the hearse which had borne it from Dublin;—senseless animals, they said, should not move it on that occasion, while they had arms and shoulders to perform the duty. So they provided a handsome little thing, a miniature hearse, still, with plumes and velvet trappings, fringed with gold lace; and in this, almost exactly fitting it, the coffin was placed, and borne, palaquin-like, upon men’s shoulders. On coming out of the chapel, the approach or lane leading to the little edifice, the churchyard, the priest’s yard and garden, and the suburb street without, were found crowded with the more respectable citizens of all ranks—and after what has been said, it will be unnecessary to add, of all sects and parties, wearing ample scarfs and hat-bands of white linen, and waiting to form into funeral procession. There could not be less than thousands of them. Similar badges of mourning had been provided for the boys of the parish school; and amongst the general train, little fellows, almost children, the sons of the citizens, were also scarfed and hat-banded;—let it be permitted to us to record, that of these childish participators in the general demonstration of sorrow, two little O’Haras were included.

The order of the funeral being arranged, it proceeded on its course. Before the coffin were men in black cloaks, with poles in their hands, draped at the top in white linen, to lead or clear the way. The truly venerable archbishop, the bishop of the diocese, and a great number of priests followed them. Immediately behind the coffin, was the one wayward self-chosen chief mourner, walking companionless—alone. After him came the relations of the deceased, wearing, like him, black cloaks. After them again, the schoolboys linked two and two, and headed by Mick Dempsey, stooped with grief, and blind with tears; then the religious women and girls of Father Connell's choir, preceded by poor Mrs. Molloy, all wearing their white cloaks; and then the long procession of those wearing scarfs and hat-bands, two and two, like the schoolboys. Some private carriages made up the train.

The body was borne from the churchyard, in which, however, finally it was to rest, and proceeded by suburb ways, to the bridge, which led into the Irish town. This it passed, and continued all through the city to the second bridge, of which the position may be recollected. The multitude which accompanied the procession, at either side of the streets, was immense. As the little hearse passed the military posts of guard along its route, the soldiers were turned out, and headed by their officers, and imitated by the sentinels on duty, presented arms. The windows were thrown up, and filled with ladies and female children, almost all wearing some insignia of mourning.

While the body was crossing the second bridge, the first bridge, a mile distant, became in view, and it was perceived that the lengthened lines of white scarfs and hat-bands, had not yet nearly passed the latter, for the private carriages were not visible. But the little hearse itself, had now but a short way to go. It was soon at its journey's end. The clergyman at its head, began to chaunt the magnificent *De profundis clamavi*. The nearest of the procession halted, and stood uncovered; and in a whisper, but with electric speed, the word ran along the whole train, through the whole town, until all stood still, and were uncovered also. The last rights ensued. A shovelful of clay was thrown upon the coffin, now in the grave; the hollow noise it made, found an echo in the breasts of all

who were near enough to hear it, and the lament that followed was awful. The grave was closed and mounded up, the sorrowful multitude gradually dispersed, and Father Connell's mortal portion was left, as he had wished it should be, "among the old parish priests, in their own old churchyard."

CHAPTER XLV.

Let many months pass away ; let many tears be dried—many and most sincere ones ; let the old soother of the deepest human sorrow, old Father Time, have his usual—and,—but that it must be part of a great mysterious plan,—we had almost said contemptible influence, upon the deepest grief that the poor human heart can experience ; at all events, let many months pass away.

Edmund Fennell is now happy with his young wife under her father's roof, where old Gaby insisted they should fix their residence. Happy, indeed, he must needs have been with such a wife as Helen ; although in the very buoyant time of his youth and of hers there had passed over their spirit an experience and control, which checked mere buoyancy, and always sobered and often saddened their future life. They deeply learned, too, the error of a hasty and clandestine marriage, and the terrible consequences in which it may involve all concerned in it ; and if, eventually, none of those consequences abided with them, they had to ascribe the blessing to their sincere contrition, and to their unceasing efforts to lead and prop, adown the descent of life, by the easiest and most flowery paths, their kind-hearted, though eccentric, and only surviving parent.

Mary Cooney perfectly recovered from the effects of the wounds she had received ; nor was her great beauty at all marred by them. Becoming assured that the poor woman who attended her was really her mother, and much touched and interested by her deep though rude affection, a serious project now occupied her young heart, for the advantage of the potato-beggar. This was to imbue her mind with

the same good and religious discipline which she had herself received under Father Connell's roof. During Mary's progress to perfect recovery, which was tedious, a good opportunity was afforded for the purpose, and Mary's filial and pious efforts were not wholly thrown away. Her mother could not read, and it would have been useless, at her age, to become her teacher in this respect. But Mary taught the poor woman all the prayers she had herself learned, and afterwards her catechism from beginning to end. The most important part of the young teacher's lessons consisted, however, in her really eloquent conversations with Nelly Carty, in explanation of articles of religious belief, or in observations upon them, directly calculated to make her a good and practical Christian; and here she was helped, not only by her vivid recollections of her old patron's continual expositions with herself, but always by a fructifying graft upon them, from her own habitual thoughts, feelings, and experience. And the poor old creature would sit on the floor at her daughter's feet, her hands clasped before her, and tears streaming down her cheeks, as she looked up into her face, listening to the girlish lecturer, with a love and an admiration, equal at least to her yearning anxiety to become, under the hands of such an instructress, "a good woman at last."

When Mary fully recovered, Nelly Carty was easily prevailed on to give up her old trade, as well as her old irreligious courses. She became settled, in a neat little cabin, on a farm belonging to Edmund Fennell, and engaged in such occupations as enabled her to earn her bread decently and honestly. One rather revengeful resolution, made in more graceless days, Nelly Carty would not however forego. When the next city assizes came round, Robin Costigan, who certainly owed the gallows a death fairly due, was a second time hanged, in the face of the shower of houses; and a woman, with the hood of her cloak drawn round her face, who, after some whispering with the sheriff, seemed to obtain that officer's permission for what she was about to do, stood watchfully at the foot of the gibbet, received the body in her arms when it was cut down, as on a similar occasion she had done upwards of thirty years before, examined curiously the tie of the rope-knot, and certain marks about the neck, apparently making

very sure that the hangman had on this occasion done his business properly, ere she would allow the carcase to be conveyed for dissection to the county hospital near at hand.

After her complete restoration to health, Mary Cooney became, in her turn, the pupil of her sister Helen. Helen was indeed surprised, to find her so advanced in her education under Mick Dempsey's instructions; but the superior mind with which Heaven had blessed the beggar-girl, soon became obvious to her sister, and Helen did not fail to do all she could to complete it. Hence, in her twenty-first year, she was Helen's equal in literature, as well as in all little accomplishments. Even her manners, her mode of speaking, the tones of her voice, her very motions, nearly resembled those characteristics of her gentle tutoress; and the two sisters, notwithstanding the many original disproportions in their lot, became close companions—it need not be said loving ones.

Master Tom Naddy had for many years cherished certain hopes, growing out of a secret love for the beggar-girl; but he did not tell his love, neither did he let the "worm prey on his damask cheek." While hope continued, Tom would try to abandon what Gaby M'Neary called "his hanging-bone-gait," whenever Mary Cooney required any service at his hands, and try to become as brisk as a bee. But as Mary improved under her sister's affectionate tuition, Tom's expectations, even in his own opinion, looked less sunny every day. He only whistled, however, over the fall of the castle he had erected, having the good sense to perceive that Mary was gradually and deservedly rising above his level, and ultimately, that she was quite beyond his reach. When she became the wife of another, he good-humoredly gave up every idea of quitting his bachelor's free and easy state; and to all hints about changing his condition, he would answer "There's more married than keeps good houses," or "I'm a great fool, but not such a fool as that would make me," or "There's no harm in lettin' well alone."

He lived his whole life with Edmund Fennell, half-friend, half-servant, spending his time, to all appearance, very much to his own satisfaction. And besides superintending cleverly and honestly houses and lands, there

was scarcely a question but that some of his leisure hours were devoted to the prompting to certain pranks the young Fennells, particularly during their childhood and earliest boyhood, of which pranks their grandfather was chiefly the object. Once, on awakening from his after-dinner nap, Gaby M'Neary found himself fettered down fast, with innumerable small bonds, in his arm-chair—the result, by the way, of Tom Naddy's recent perusal of Gulliver's Travels, and of his impartation of his knowledge to his promising pupils. It was decided in council that Gaby should perform the part of Gulliver; and it was in vain he tried to arise, and stamp with his stick, towards the imps who were laughing at him in one corner, or towards Tom Naddy who was grinning at him from another. On another occasion, after putting his spectacles on his nose, over and over again, inquiring at each trial, "What has come over ye for spectacles?" and still not being able to see one jot through them, he would at length discover that the cause of his failure was owing to their glasses having been carefully extracted. Again, the besom would somehow become metamorphosed into a blackamoor, and Gaby M'Neary would find the unsightly bedfellow "cheek-by-jowl" with him in his bed, when he awoke in the morning. But worse still; Boxer, the rough muzzled terrier, being first set a snarling, was by Tom Naddy's tuition taught to growl out "Grandpapa" very distinctly—the operator holding his jaws between his finger and thumb, and occasionally tightening or relaxing his grasp, so as to break up the animal's snarl into the word desired. Under these persecutions, Gaby vented all his abusive epithets on Tom Naddy; and it behooved Tom to keep his eye well about him, in order to avoid condign punishment; and his old master, unable to overtake him in his dodgings round the parlor, or out of it, would hide behind the doors, and other screens of like convenience, to get one good hit at the offender. And yet Gaby M'Neary highly prized Tom Naddy, in common, indeed, with every one around him.

And Tom was doomed to administer to the happiness of other folk. By his unremitting agency, and it is supposed not to his pecuniary disadvantage, little Miss Bessie Langan and Mr. "Q. O. unexpounded," became united in holy

wedlock ; and to do the little lady common justice, it may be added, that Mr. Stanton, at least, could not have made a better choice. She was very proud, if not very grateful, for the increased comforts and worldly consequence which he brought her ; for a larger house, in a larger street ; for larger breakfasts, dinners, and suppers of her own, than she had ever been accustomed to ; for a larger wardrobe ;—in fact, for everything on a larger scale ; and to guard against any stint of his liberality, she sought out studiously and cunningly to give him the peculiar marks of affection which his temper and character required. From the day of his marriage to the day of his death, he had not once to complain that his gold-headed cane stood an inch out of its prescribed resting-place ; and as to his queue, no hands but those of his wife had ever so precisely ribboned it, or so neatly adjusted it between his shoulders.

The stalwart, the bearded, the ill-favored, but still the good-hearted Mrs. Molloy, did not lose by her liberal donation towards the expenses of a certain sad journey, on a late most melancholy occasion. In fact, her “warm-hearted boy” did not forget her. She was settled by him in what she herself called a “sthrong hucksther’s shop,” where she went on multiplying the reinstated contents of her stocking. And here she exacted from Edmund Fennell’s children a tribute of attention to be paid three or four times a week—or rather to be eaten up three or four times a week—for the ceremony consisted in devouring, upon each of their visits, a certain quantity of her home-made currant-cake. And if any of them failed in his or her duty, Mrs. Molloy, feeling much offended by the neglect, would, immediately on the occurrence of such omission, close and lock up her establishment, hasten to their house, and scold their father and mother heartily for the bad bringing up of their children. So long as the good woman lived, whenever there was a new birth in the Fennell family, or whenever any of the boys or girls were cutting their teeth, or indeed indisposed in any way, Mrs. Molloy conceived that nothing could be properly done without the advantage of her presence and assistance.

She was an old woman when the good and great man—great it is added, because he was greatly good—her venerable master, died. Yet she survived him for more than

a dozen years ; and she was blessed by the assurance of Edmund Fennell, that he would gratify the now fondest wish of her heart, by closing her eyes, after her last breathing in this world. And her "warm-hearted boy" kept his promise religiously, performing it not without many grateful recollections and true tears.

Although occasionally a very cross woman, and apt to make her displeasure known in a manner not to be mistaken, yet in good truth her heart bubbled over with the milk of human kindness. To be sure, her love for her species was shown after a fashion of her own ; and there was one individual of that species whom, though she by no means disliked him—Tom Naddy, of course, is meant—she never designated, till the hour of her death, by any other term than that of "kiln-dried brat."

NOTES.

I.—P. 13.

The description here given scarcely does justice to the "Biddy Doyle' Cakes," provided by Father Connell for his Twelfth Night's guests. The sole manufacture of these delicious condiments was confined to the resident of a suburb street, and Biddy Doyle lived very comfortably and cosily in her thatched two-story dwelling, which overtopped all the neighboring houses, in consequence of her exclusive trade, which no one but herself knew anything about. Every evening her "*Calleen na sedogus*," or "Girl of the Cakes," bore on her head, in a large, heaped-up basket, and fresh from the oven, the next day's supply for the different shops throughout the town. As she passed along, the air was literally filled with fragrance; passengers would turn their heads, and the most riotous urchins pause in the full exuberance of their sports to sniff the perfumed gale. It was the universal opinion of high and low, old and young, that a penny could not be better expended than in the purchase of an odoriferous "Biddy Doyle." No tea-table was furnished without them, and on the evening of his Twelfth Night's banquet, Father Connell's (Father O'Donnell's) parlor used to be redolent of their perfume from floor to ceiling. The feast of cakes and ale, as set forth in the tale, is literally true in all particulars.

II.—P. 31.

There is a licence taken as to the locality of the poor school built by Father O'Donnell, and also as to the time when it was erected. That he did succeed in building a school for the education of the poor, in the manner described, is certain. But his architectural plans were carried out before he had reached the dignity of parish priest, and while yet the "coadjutor" of another district. The school yet stands as it was erected mainly by the aid of his little assistants, employed as told in the story; the other necessary funds he obtained by begging; and the identical edifice is now a National School in connection with the Board of Education.

III.—P. 39.

The anecdote of the watch is strictly fact: all the circumstances, even to the words used on the occasion, were detailed to the writer by the recipient of the gift. His name, by the way, was Mick Conell, not Mick Dempsey.

IV.—P. 40.

All the details of the Christmas distribution of clothing, as given in Chap. V. are literally true. There is no attempt at embellishment or exaggeration; even the deception played off by the old priest and the

schoolmaster, Mick Conell, to screen the deviation from justice to mercy, is correct, and just as it was enacted. The bosheen, where Father O'Donnell concealed himself to review the troop of new-clad urchins, was then a lonely winding lane, but little frequented. The wide and well-kept road leading from our city to Dublin, has replaced the solitary bye-way; and the bellowing and puffing and spectre-whistling of steam-engines, and the thunder of steam-carriages, little dreamed of in those days, has now changed the entire identity of the lonely bosheen.

V.—P. 50.

But one or two cabins now remain of the topsy-turvy collection of hovels, noticed in the text, and with much propriety designated, "the shower of houses." The gas works supplying our city with light occupy the greater portion of the now levelled but formerly hill and hollow surface, on which the wigwags of the tale stood. The description holds good for the period of the story, and for many subsequent years.

VI.—P. 55.

The class of mendicants described at the opening of Chap. VII. and known as "potato-beggars" has become nearly, if not altogether, extinct. Since the erection of the workhouses, for the support of which the Irish farmers are heavily taxed, the wholesale distribution of food to the potato-beggars has ceased. Those known under this appellation, used, while the dispensation continued, to live royally, as to eatables and drinkables, but they were, without an exception, miserable tatterdemalions in attire. Good reason there was for this raggedness—a costume either whole or cleanly would be unprofessional, and belie the lamentable tale, fabricated to operate like a mesmeric finger on the potato grower's bump of benevolence. The women under notice were, as a clan (with some honorable exceptions, of course), of depraved morals. Scarcely any of the male sex prowled about amongst them; and a stereotyped appeal to the sympathy of the farmers' wives, who were blessed with sturdy and valued husbands, was to the effect "that there wasn't a mankind on the flure to do a hand's turn." This was an *argumentum ad rem* to all who prized their helpmates.

It was more than problematical, if amongst the entire swarm of bare-footed tramps there was one wedded woman; there was no dearth of children in their hovels, notwithstanding,—the males banished to provide for themselves, as they reached maturity, and the females brought up to follow their worthy mothers' tracks, literally to tread in their footsteps along the well-marked footpaths leading to the farm-houses. The potato-beggars were, by their own account, every one of them, poor forlorn widows, with large helpless families, and, therefore—Heaven help them!—great objects of commiseration. It must in truth be admitted, that they were for the most part expert thieves, and seldom without a plump fowl for supper. They had their points of utility, notwithstanding all this. They were the purveyors of the market for the very needy, who could purchase the national esculent in small quantities only, and from day to day. "Beggars' potatoes" were easily distinguished from all others offered for sale, being a heterogeneous admixture of every

kind cultivated ;—the cheaper for this reason, and the more come-at-able by the purchaser with a lank purse.

The potato-beggars were welcome at the farmers' houses as the carriers of news and gossip to suit all tastes ; they were invaluable as match-makers ; contrivers and promoters of assignations :—accredited *employees* of the rustic Cupid in fact, and as such, apparently necessary constituents of the rural social economy of the time.

The defects and blemishes of the dames described have been set forth. There is no cloud, however, without its "silver lining," seen only, peradventure, by the sun that lights it—and the ladies spoken of were distinguished by one excellent and generally-pervading characteristic. To those more needy than themselves they were truly benevolent and compassionate ; the wandering stranger was never refused a share of the potato-beggar's supper, whether the same was honestly or dishonestly obtained ; the warmest corner near the cosy fire was never denied to such as claimed it, and a bed as good as could be provided was never refused to weary, houseless poverty.

There was no legal provision for the footsore and penniless traveller when the potato-beggars were in their glory. Well-to-do people would not harbor such outcast guests, but to the potato-beggars they were ever welcome ; want and weariness were sufficient recommendations, and no inquiry made as to antecedents. It is a well-known fact, that in Ireland, anterior to the Poor-law enactments, the poor were the chief supporters of the poor ; those having but little, sharing that little to the last mouthful. The writer has before now witnessed very many instances of the cordial welcome given to fainting and famishing wanderers by those needing succor for themselves. The potato-beggars were pre-eminent as welcomers of the houseless.

A curious calculation was entered into not long since, and on sufficient data, whereby it was ascertained that while lavish distribution of potatoes was the order of the day in our locality, the annual money-value of this species of food gratuitously bestowed in a circle round our town of five miles radius, was little, if at all short, of six thousand pounds sterling.

VII.—P. 64.

The writer can pledge himself that there is nothing of the imaginative in this statement of a theft committed by his parish priest in his own humble abode. The assistant in a raid, identical with that described, was the narrator of all the particulars. The old man's housekeeper was a diligent and expert flax-spinner, and three or more pieces of home-made linen were annually fabricated into sheets, table-covering, and inner-garments ; and yet at Father O'Donnell's death there were but two patched shirts in his chest of drawers. Whenever or wherever nakedness came under his notice, his unlimited compassion was aroused. He would on such recounters take the object of his commiseration by the hand, and lead him to some concealed spot—if the meeting took place in the street, the first open doorway answered the purpose—he would denude himself on the instant of his linen, and with it cover the bareness of his companion ; and then, buttoning his vest and coat up to his chin, hurry home, to contend with the dame, named in the tale Mrs.

Molloy, for a further supply. On all such occasions he had to prepare for a severe rebuke from the said dame, who regarded this species of property more as her own than that of her master, as being the result principally of her handiwork, with but little additional outlay of capital.

VIII.—P. 76.

Father O'Donnell related to the informant of the writer, that during his ministry he had twice attended the same man to the gibbet, with small interval of time between the escape in the first instance and the actual infliction of death in the second—a second theft almost immediately following the restored ability to perpetrate it. In those days, as is well known, death was the punishment of crimes now regarded as minor offences.

IX.—P. 89.

The beggar's petition here given, is word for word as the writer heard it delivered by a street mendicant, such in personal appearance and such in character as the tale describes Darby Cooney to have been

X.—P. 95.

"Dick Wresham's school" is not a fancy sketch. There was an assembly such as that pencilled, composed of staid elderly men for the most part, held daily in and around Dick Wresham's surgery: the principal business of the seminary being, the arrangement and execution of practical jokes, for which species of mis-called witticism our town was celebrated in former times. Many of the would-be jests were no jests at all. Generally speaking, the pranks played were compounds of mischief and humor; often they were purely mischievous, without any qualifying admixture.

XI.—P. 109.

Some may be inclined to regard the account given in the tale of the "English Academy," of the master thereof, and of some of the boys contemporaneous with the author and his brother, as an intrusion; but the picture, so far as it is drawn, is the copy of a real subject.

XII.—P. 134.

The letter of the text is copied from one written by a wag, as the introduction of a distressed man seeking the assistance of Father O'Donnell.

XIII.—P. 145.

It has been remarked of late, either that idiocy is not so prevalent now as formerly, or else, more probably, that creatures so afflicted take shelter in the workhouses, and do not ramble at large. Within the writer's recollection not less than a dozen idiots were constantly resident in or frequent visitors of our city, and all of them welcome guests to

the Nick Magrath of the tale. A curious, and perhaps not uninteresting paper might be written, descriptive of the individual weakness of intellect distinguishing each of our local dozen of "fools," as they were called :—some faculties of the mind astute and perfect, others inoperative and inapplicable ; in no two instances the character of the idiocy identical ; one general similitude, however—a total dislike and unfitness for any continuous occupation.

XIV.—P. 260.

Upwards of seventy years ago, a boy of fourteen suffered the extreme penalty of the law in our city, and for the murder of his own aunt. The day previous to the fulfilment of his sentence, a pet jackdaw, having a weight suspended from its feet, was found hanging by the neck from a rusty nail in the wall of his cell ; and the youthful desperado admitted that he had been the bird's executioner, his object being, as he said, to contemplate the manner of his own death-throe.

FATHER O'DONNELL, the model for the hero of the tale, died of fever, imbibed while attending the death-bed of one of his poor parishioners. That he might be able to hear the words of the dying man, and whisper the consolation of his ministry to him, it was necessary he should stretch himself by the sufferer's side, on the bed of straw, made up, not on a bedstead, but on the floor of the cabin, and he inhaled the infectious breathings of the man he comforted.*

The yearly income of Father O'Donnell for his personal support, after deducting the salaries of two "coadjutors," scarcely reached one hundred pounds. The weddings of substantial people brought something handsome ; at christenings, too, presents were made, according to the ability of the parents ; but the chief source of emolument was derivable from the Christmas and Easter "dues."

The "dues," so called, were a voluntary tax levied on the parishioners by themselves assembled in parish meeting ; the amount varying from five shillings, the ultimatum, down to sixpence. Those desirous of being considered as leading men headed the list ; the poorer giving authority for the levy of the sixpence, and a considerable majority paying nothing at all. For the collection of the "dues" so levied, the priest appointed district tax-gatherers ; which officials were regarded very differently from their fellow-laborers, the tithe-proctors of the period. They were everywhere received with a cordial and respectful greeting : the tip-top payment of five shillings was made at once, and if the minimum sixpence was "under the cover of the roof," although that roof might not be weather-proof, it was sure to be forthcoming.

The priest's collectors looked on their appointment as a distinction. Their instalment in office was regarded by themselves and their fellow-

* That an old priest, however, did expire at the feet of a viceroy of Ireland while petitioning for the life of an innocent person, was given to the writer as a fact.

parishioners as an acknowledgment of their correctness, general good conduct, and regular fulfilment of all their religious duties. To compare very different things, they might be called the priest's color-sergeants, and they held up their heads and took rank as such.

At Christmas and Easter the honored and trusted gatherers of the "dues" delivered up their accounts. Then came a close scrutiny into the circumstances of the donors. As to the five-shilling rate-payers, there was no question about them, but the sixpenny contributors were carefully inquired after; and the writer has had it from more than one of the respectable men collecting the tax, that on the winding-up of affairs, very many of the sixpenny men not only received their small contributions back again, but two, three, and as many as ten other sixpences out of the general fund might be added thereto, where sickness or other calamity had fallen on a humble family. Before the net proceeds were deposited in the old oak desk, one-fourth at least of Father O'Donnell's "dues" went in this way. No wonder the sixpenny men should be willing to meet his collectors!

Father O'Donnell's table was furnished sparingly; he fared comfortably, however; but by his arrangements no residue went to his kitchen, his housekeeper being provided for separately.

Immediately beneath Father O'Donnell's parlor window an aged apple and gingerbread seller had fixed herself, if not by his special invitation, at least with his full approval. The end of the avenue turning up to the chapel was certainly a very good spot for catching spare half-pence. Father O'Donnell had provided this old dame with an immense old-time umbrella, newly covered, when the present was made, with strong grey linen. This great umbrella shaded herself and her stall either from sun or rain, as the case might require. There was another use for it also. Every morning in the year, as soon as the old priest had breakfasted, his parlor window was raised up and his tray was slid out over the window-sill to old Alice Mahony the apple woman, a previous tap having given notice of what was to follow. The big umbrella was raised to ward off observation, and behind its privacy the old woman fared sumptuously,—encouraged while she feasted by the whispered invitations of her entertainer. When she had satisfied herself, the tray was quietly slid back again the way it had come. Not to speak of the daily morning meal, the priest might be considered as Alice Mahony's best customer. A looker-on would suppose he must have been a great lover of apples and gingerbread; sixpence *per diem*, at least, was so expended; but the sixpence was not so laid out for his personal gratification. There were two good reasons for the outlay,—the old woman deserved encouragement, and there were many good boys and girls to be met with in the course of the day.

But Alice Mahony was not to expect two meals on any one day; this would be an injustice to others. When Father O'Donnell had dined, however, he need only raise the latch of the door leading from his yard into the chapel lane, and there he was certain to find the hungry man or woman he had desired to be there. This person was duly seated at the table from which he had risen, and in addition to the remnant of the mid-day meal, might reckon on a draught of the ale furnished to himself.

More than one-half of Father O'Donnell's one hundred per annum was given away in money; one-fourth additional was bestowed in food, principally in the manner above related. It will not, therefore, surprise the reader to learn that, at his decease, four pence half-penny was the entire sum of his own money found in his desk. There was money for his school, and money for other charitable purposes; but these different parcels of coin were duly labelled for appropriation.

The writer of these notes could multiply veritable anecdotes of the old priest to any length; all tending to prove that the character of the "Father Connell" of the tale is no fiction. Perhaps, however, he has already gone far enough.

THE END.

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